AL-FIQH AL-AKBAR

AND

KITAB AL-TAWHID

An Integrated Commentary on
the Essential Teachings of
Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah
and
Imam al-Maturidi

DR. YUSOF MUTAHAR

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Dr. Yusof Mutahar

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DISCLAIMER & ACCURACY STATEMENT

This work is a systematic theological commentary on the orthodox creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*, specifically focusing on the organic historical and methodological continuity of the Hanafi–Maturidi tradition. The author asserts the moral right to be identified as the creator of this work.
While every effort has been made to ensure the total accuracy of all Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), Arabic citations, metaphysical discussions, and direct references to classical Sunni scholarship, any human shortcomings or errors remain solely the responsibility of the author.

This text reflects the author's independent academic research and structural presentation, drawing directly upon the original methodologies established by Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi to deliver a balanced, uncompromised deconstruction of foundational Islamic creed.

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

O Allah, bestow Your favour upon Muhammad ﷺ and upon the family of Muhammad, as You bestowed Your favour upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.

O Allah, bestow Your blessing upon Muhammad ﷺ and upon the family of Muhammad, as You bestowed Your blessing upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.

Dedication

This humble work is dedicated to two of the greatest defenders of Islamic orthodoxy and the timeless creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*:

To **Imām al-Aʿẓam Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʿmān ibn Thābit** (رحمه الله) — the Master of jurisprudence, intellect, and disciplined theological reasoning, whose profound understanding of *tawḥīd*, divine transcendence, and legal methodology laid the structural foundations for the largest scholarly tradition in Islamic history. Through his brilliant preservation of reason anchored firmly in revelation, he permanently safeguarded the religion from extremism, confusion, and theological deviation.

And to **Shaykh Ahl al-Sunnah, Imām Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī** (رحمه الله) — the architect of orthodox Sunni creed and a supreme champion of Divine transcendence (*tanzīh*), who upheld the perfect equilibrium between revelation and intellect, and whose towering scholarship protected the *Ummah* from anthropomorphism, corporealism, and theological excess. Through his unassailable efforts, the creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah* was clarified, systematised, and preserved for generations to come.

And to the modern standard-bearer of this timeless lineage, **Shaykh al-Islām Imām Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī** (رحمه الله) — the monumental verifier, Reviver (*Mujaddid)* of his century, and the supreme champion of orthodox Sunni theology in the modern era, who fearlessly deployed the full weight of classical methodology to serve as an unyielding refuter of anthropomorphism and corporealism. Through his masterful treatises, he exposed the stark historical contradictions of modern neo-literalism and fiercely protected the inseparable, integrated continuum of Ḥanafī jurisprudence, Māturīdī creed, and the Naqshbandī spiritual path, ensuring that the holistic legacy of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah remained entirely unassailable against contemporary distortion.

"The foundation of Divine Oneness (Tawḥīd) and that upon which correct belief must validly rest requires one to say: I believe in Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His messengers, the resurrection after death, and the divine decree—both its good and its evil being from Allah Most High—and the Final Accounting, the Balance, Paradise, and the Hellfire. And all of this is an absolute reality."

Imām al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʿmān ibn Thābit, al-Fiqh al-Akbar

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Preface

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds. We praise Him, seek His assistance, and ask Him for guidance and forgiveness. Peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad ﷺ, his family, his Companions, and all those who follow their path until the Day of Judgement.

The science of Islamic creed (*ʿaqidah*) concerns the most fundamental realities of religion. It addresses the essential questions that lie at the heart of human existence: Who is Allah? Why were we created? What must we believe? What is the purpose of revelation? What happens after death? How should we understand prophethood, the divine attributes, and the divine decree? For more than fourteen centuries, Muslim scholars have devoted immense effort to preserving, explaining, and defending these foundational beliefs. Among the most influential works ever written in this field are *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* of **Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah** and *Kitab al-Tawhid* of **Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi**. Although separated by nearly two centuries, these two works represent a single theological tradition and remain among the most important contributions to Sunni creed.

Despite the immense historical and theological importance of these texts, a distinct academic gap has persisted for centuries: while previous scholarship has analysed *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* individually, this work represents the first time both foundational masterpieces have been structurally merged and synthesised into a single, unified volume. By examining their parallel principles chapter by chapter, this book bridges basic conceptual overviews of creed with the deepest layers of advanced Maturidi metaphysics and the unshakeable communal boundaries of Sunni orthodoxy. Consequently, it functions as a multi-tiered curriculum: providing clear, essential foundations for the common Muslim, structured reference points for

the student of knowledge, and rigorous technical deconstructions for the scholar.

A primary objective of this work is to demonstrate the absolute historical and theological continuity between these two giants. They are, in truth, expressions of the exact same school; there is no Maturidi creed without the foundational principles of Imam Abu Hanifah, just as the true theological legacy of the Hanafi school finds its ultimate codification in Imam al-Maturidi. Because Imam al-Aʿzam did not leave behind an exhaustive library of systematic theology written by his own hand, his primary legacy was preserved through his students. Imam al-Maturidi stands as one of the greatest intellectual heirs in this direct scholarly chain (*silsilah*). He perfectly encapsulated Abu Hanifah's methodology, expanded upon his core concepts, and defended them against contemporary deviations. There is no legitimate separation or differentiation to be made between them. They are, in essence, two expressions of the same intellectual and spiritual inheritance.

A second objective of this work is to highlight the deeply scriptural nature of this tradition. It is sometimes alleged that the Hanafi-Maturidi school relies excessively upon speculative reasoning at the expense of revelation. Such claims fail to withstand serious examination. Throughout these pages, the reader will encounter a consistent pattern: theological conclusions derived from the Qur'an, supported by the Sunnah, and clarified through sound reasoning. The methodology of Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi was never one of replacing revelation with reason, but rather of employing reason in service of revelation. Their creed is firmly rooted in the Book of Allah and the teachings of His Messenger ﷺ.

Regrettably, in the contemporary landscape, we witness individuals attempting to graft contradictory methodologies onto the Hanafi-Maturidi legacy, adopting self-contradictory labels such as "Hanafi-Athari" or "Hanafi-Wahhabi". Such terms represent complete theological oxymorons and historical impossibilities. They arise entirely from a profound lack of

knowledge regarding the actual methodology (*manhaj*) and unique epistemological framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and his direct students. One cannot truly adhere to the Hanafi school in jurisprudence while rejecting its foundational intellectual framework in creed—particularly regarding the non-fluctuation of faith (*iman*) and the containment of *takfir*. This book was written, in part, as a direct response to clear away these modern uncertainties and confusion. At the same time, this work is designed to bridge complex scholastic realities with maximum clarity, striking a deliberate balance between academic precision and textual economy. The work intentionally incorporates analytical layers that delve into Maturidi metaphysics, technical scholastic theology, and the protective principles governing the Prophetic household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and the Companions (*Sahaba*), providing a clear path of intellectual advancement for both the student of knowledge and the teacher.

In today's landscape, we face a unique paradox: there is an abundance of information and knowledge, but a profound scarcity of true wisdom. This book seeks to bridge that gap by clearing away modern doubts and anchoring the mind in foundational truths. *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar* itself is a perfect example of this approach. Although concise in length, it addresses some of the deepest questions in Islamic theology and continues to be studied by scholars more than a millennium after it was written.

Accordingly, this book presents the essential teachings of Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi in a format that remains faithful to the depth, sophistication, and academic rigour of the original tradition. It is intended to benefit a broad readership: the ordinary Muslim seeking a structured understanding of faith, the active student wishing to consolidate foundational knowledge, the teacher requiring a precise reference, and the advanced scholar seeking a systematic deconstruction of the Hanafi-Maturidi theological framework.

Throughout this work, relevant Qur'anic verses, authentic prophetic traditions, and key insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* have been brought together in a structured format. The aim is neither to replace the classical texts nor to provide an exhaustive commentary upon them. Rather, it is to offer a concise yet comprehensive presentation of their most essential teachings while encouraging readers to engage more deeply with the original works themselves.

For those readers and advanced students who wish to pursue a more rigorous, specialised study of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition and its textual foundations, several of my previous works may serve as useful companions to this volume. For a comprehensive analysis of the school's historical evolution and epistemological foundations, one may refer to *Imam Maturidi: Architect of Islamic Creed*. For targeted deconstructions of classical metaphysics and the defence of absolute transcendence, *Allah Exists Without a Place: A Refutation of Anthropomorphism* offers an exhaustive treatment. Furthermore, those seeking to explore the broader sciences of scriptural transmission, legal hermeneutics, and exegesis within this tradition may consult my works *Sahih Musnad al-Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah*, *Imam Abu Hanifah: Master of Qiyas*, and my multi-volume translation and commentary project, *Tafsir Al-Maturidi: Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunna*.

I ask Allah Most High to accept this humble effort, to forgive its shortcomings, and to make it a source of lasting benefit for all who read it. Whatever is correct in this work is from Allah alone, and whatever is mistaken is from myself.

And Allah knows best.

Dr. Yusof Mutahar

Introduction

The Importance of Creed in Islam

The study of Islamic creed (*ʿaqidah*) occupies a unique and central position within the Islamic sciences. While jurisprudence (*fiqh*) governs outward actions and spirituality (*tasawwuf*) refines the inner self, creed concerns the foundational beliefs upon which every aspect of religion is constructed. It addresses the most fundamental questions of human existence: Who is Allah? Why were we created? What must we believe? What happens after death? How do we understand revelation, prophethood, and the divine decree?

For this reason, the earliest revelations of the Qur'an focused primarily upon matters of belief. Before the detailed laws of prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage were revealed, the Qur'an firmly established faith in Allah, the Hereafter, revelation, and prophethood. Correct belief preceded correct action because sound worship can only emerge from sound faith.

The scholars of Islam therefore regarded creed as the definitive foundation of religion. Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah famously referred to theology as *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*—the Greater Understanding—highlighting its precedence over all other branches of knowledge. A person may master countless legal rulings, yet if his understanding of Allah and the foundations of faith is corrupted, his knowledge ultimately remains deficient.

Throughout Islamic history, scholars devoted immense effort to preserving, explaining, and defending the creed transmitted by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions. Among the most influential figures in this endeavour were Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, whose works continue to shape the theological outlook of millions of Muslims throughout the world.

The Six Pillars of Faith and the Communal Boundary

The structure of Islamic creed is derived directly from the famous *Hadith of Jibril*. In this narration, the Angel Jibril appeared before the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the form of a man and asked him about Islam, faith (*iman*), and spiritual excellence (*ihsan*). When asked about faith, the Prophet ﷺ replied: *"**Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and the divine decree, its good and its evil.**"*

These six principles became known as the pillars of faith and form the bedrock of Islamic theology, providing a comprehensive framework through which Muslims understand existence, purpose, morality, accountability, and salvation:

- **Belief in Allah** establishes the foundational relationship between the Creator and creation.

- **Belief in the Angels** affirms the reality of the unseen world and celestial obedience.

- **Belief in the Revealed Books** affirms the descent of absolute divine guidance.

- **Belief in the Messengers** affirms the human vessels through which that guidance reaches humanity.

- **Belief in the Last Day** establishes eternal accountability and ultimate justice.

- **Belief in Divine Decree** affirms Allah's absolute sovereignty while preserving human responsibility.

Crucially, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition establishes that these six pillars cannot exist in a vacuum; they naturally extend into the historical reality of the Muslim community. To protect the integrity of scriptural transmission

(*naql*), the school codifies the boundaries of community orthodoxy—specifically, deep devotion to the Prophetic household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and absolute reverence for the Companions (*Sahaba*)—as vital, protective extensions of faith. True monotheism is thus guarded by maintaining the sacred continuum of the early community.

Imam Abu Hanifah and al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man ibn Thabit (80–150 AH / 699–767 CE) occupies a unique and unparalleled position in Islamic history. Although he is primarily celebrated as the founder of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, his contributions extended far beyond law. Born during the era of the *Tabi'un*, Imam Abu Hanifah studied under some of the greatest scholars of his age, including Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, and became renowned for his intelligence, piety, integrity, and mastery of legal reasoning. His influence upon Islamic law was so profound that the Hanafi school would eventually become the most widely followed school of jurisprudence in the Muslim world.

Less widely appreciated, however, is his monumental contribution to theology. At a time when numerous theological disputes and sectarian movements were emerging, Imam Abu Hanifah articulated the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah with remarkable clarity. His treatise *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* remains one of the earliest surviving works devoted specifically to Islamic theology. The title itself is highly significant. By describing creed as "the Greater Understanding," Imam Abu Hanifah emphasised that correct belief forms the unyielding foundation upon which all other religious knowledge rests. Within *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, the Imam structures discussions around many of the most critical theological questions, including the nature of Allah, the divine attributes, the Qur'an as the Speech of Allah, prophethood, faith, divine decree, and the realities of the Hereafter, expressing profound truths with immaculate textual precision.

Imam al-Maturidi and Kitab al-Tawhid

More than a century after Imam Abu Hanifah, another remarkable scholar emerged in Central Asia to preserve and defend this legacy: Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333 AH / 944 CE). Born in the region of Samarqand, Imam al-Maturidi inherited the theological framework of Imam Abu Hanifah through an unbroken scholarly tradition and developed it into a comprehensive intellectual system. Through his writings, he defended Sunni creed against numerous theological deviations and established what would later become known as the Maturidi school of theology.

His greatest theological masterpiece is *Kitab al-Tawhid*. Unlike the highly epigrammatic style of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *Kitab al-Tawhid* presents rigorous, exhaustive discussions concerning the existence of Allah, the divine attributes, revelation, prophethood, free will, divine decree, and numerous other complex theological issues. One of Imam al-Maturidi's greatest contributions was his demonstration that authentic revelation and sound reason are fundamentally harmonious. He rejected both blind fideism and excessive rationalism, advocating instead a balanced approach rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and sound intellectual reflection.

The intellectual bond between Imam al-Aʿzam Abu Hanifah and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi is not merely one of retrospective alignment; it is a relationship forged through a rigorous, unbroken chain of scholarly transmission (*silsilah*) that historically transplanted the theology of Kufa into the soil of Transoxiana. Imam al-Maturidi’s unyielding theological loyalty to Abu Hanifah was nurtured by his primary instructors in Samarkand, most notably Abu Bakr al-Juzajani and Nusayr ibn Yahya al-Balkhi. These masters inherited the school’s foundational doctrine directly from Abu Sulayman al-Juzajani, who was himself the prized disciple of Abu Hanifah’s two greatest students: Imam Muhammad al-Shaybani and the Chief Justice Abu Yusuf. Through this pristine epistemological lineage, Imam al-Maturidi did not innovate a new creedal system; rather, he served as the ultimate codifier of

the authentic, foundational Hanafi theological tradition. His genius lay in translating the concise, defensive maxims found in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *al-Fiqh al-Absat*, and *al-Wasiyyah* into an expansive, unassailable metaphysical system capable of neutralising the complex rationalist challenges posed by the Mu'tazilah, Jahmiyyah, and various philosophical factions of his era. To adhere to the Maturidi paradigm is, in historical reality, to remain fiercely loyal to the authentic, uninterrupted intellectual legacy of Imam al-Aʿzam himself.

The Relationship Between al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

Although separated by nearly two centuries, these two masterpieces are deeply and intrinsically connected. Imam Abu Hanifah established the foundational principles, while Imam al-Maturidi expanded, defended, and systematised those very maxims into an airtight methodology. For this reason, traditional scholars never regarded Imam al-Maturidi as the founder of a new creed; rather, they viewed him as one of the foremost exponents, defenders, and codifiers of the theological legacy inherited from Imam Abu Hanifah. The purpose of this book is therefore not to present two separate theological systems, but rather to introduce a single, completely unified intellectual tradition represented by two of its greatest scholars.

The Hanafi-Maturidi Tradition Through History

The theological tradition represented by Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi became one of the most influential intellectual traditions in Islamic civilisation. Through generations of scholars, jurists, theologians, judges, and educators, its teachings spread throughout Central Asia, Khurasan, Transoxiana, the Indian Subcontinent, Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Ottoman Empire. Among its distinguished representatives were Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi, Imam Abu al-Yusr al-Bazdawi, Imam Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi, Imam al-Saffar, Imam al-Taftazani, Imam al-Sabuni, Imam Kamal ibn

al-Humam, Imam Ibn 'Abidin, and, in more recent times, Imam Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari.

This historical continuity is significant because it demonstrates that the Hanafi school was never merely a legal school. From its earliest generations, it possessed a coherent theological methodology alongside its jurisprudential methodology. Law and creed developed together as complementary disciplines rooted in a shared intellectual heritage.

Regrettably, modern discourse frequently detaches the school's legal rulings from its native theological roots, artificially grafting alien doctrinal frameworks onto Hanafi jurisprudence. This contemporary trend has given rise to eclectic designations like "Hanafi-Athari" or "Hanafi-Wahhabi." From a rigorous methodological standpoint, these hybrid terms represent stark historical contradictions and systematic incompatibilities. They attempt to fuse distinct intellectual currents that operate on fundamentally divergent epistemological principles, ignoring the internal harmony that classical authorities spent centuries preserving.

This modern error was masterfully exposed in the twentieth century by the monumental Ottoman scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari. Throughout his extensive treatises and critical commentaries, Shaykh al-Kawthari demonstrated that the authentic Hanafi lineage has always maintained an inseparable, integrated theological framework. He fiercely defended the position that the legal insights of the people of Iraq—pioneered by Imam Abu Hanifah—are structurally and intellectually tied to the creedal system codified by Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi.

To follow the school means to accept it as a holistic legacy. The foundational principles initiated by Imam Abu Hanifah, transmitted faithfully through his immediate circles, and ultimately systematised by Imam al-Maturidi form a single, airtight methodology where law and belief reinforce one another. The

historical Hanafi tradition therefore understood jurisprudence and theology as inseparable components of a unified scholarly legacy. To study Imam Abu Hanifah solely as a jurist while neglecting the theological principles that informed his scholarship is to encounter only part of the tradition he established. It is precisely this complete, unified Hanafi-Maturidi inheritance that the present work seeks to introduce.

Structure of This Work

This book is organised around the six pillars of faith mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the *Hadith of Jibril*, culminating in the protective boundary of community orthodoxy. Through **twenty-five chapters**, it examines the essential teachings of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* concerning Allah, the angels, revelation, prophethood, the Hereafter, divine decree, and the Prophetic heritage. Rather than offering a superficial summary, each chapter bridges a clear conceptual overview of these pillars with the deepest layers of Maturidi metaphysics and technical scholastic theology.

Each chapter begins with relevant Qur'anic verses and authentic prophetic traditions before examining the subject through the integrated lens of Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi. In this way, the reader is able to see not only the definitive theological conclusions reached by these great scholars, but also the rigorous scriptural and rational foundations upon which those conclusions are based. It is intended to serve as an authoritative reference, a comprehensive synthesis of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, and an advanced gateway for the student of knowledge and the scholar seeking a systematic deconstruction of this rich intellectual heritage.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 1: Why Creed Matters

The study of Islamic creed ('aqidah) concerns the most fundamental questions a human being can ask: Who is Allah? Why were we created? What must we believe in order to attain salvation? These questions form the foundation upon which every other aspect of religion is built.

For this reason, the scholars of Islam regarded creed as the most important branch of religious knowledge. Before a Muslim learns the details of prayer, fasting, charity, or pilgrimage, he must first possess a sound understanding of the beliefs that define his relationship with Allah.

The importance of creed is reflected throughout the Qur'an. The earliest revelations focused primarily on faith, the oneness of Allah, prophethood, revelation, and the Hereafter. Only after these foundations had been firmly established were many of the detailed legal rulings revealed. This demonstrates that correct belief precedes correct action.

In every generation, Muslims have faced challenges concerning matters of belief. Some denied the divine attributes, others misunderstood divine decree, while others attempted to describe Allah in ways that resemble creation. As a result, the scholars devoted considerable effort to preserving and explaining the creed transmitted by the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.

Among the greatest of these scholars were Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah (d. 150 AH) and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333 AH), whose works continue to serve as foundational texts for Sunni theology. This book seeks to

present the essential teachings found in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* in a clear and accessible manner for the modern reader.

Qur'anic Evidence

The foundational status of creed is not a secondary development of later systematic theology (*kalam*); rather, it is explicitly dictated by the epistemological hierarchy established within the text of divine revelation itself. In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, textual transmission (*naql*) provides the absolute, immutable source of faith, while sound human reason (*ʿaql*) serves to conceptualise, defend, and unpack its profound meanings. The Qur'an systematically commands humanity to seek certainty (*yaqin*) rather than mere conjecture (*zann*) in matters of belief. It establishes that cognitive recognition of divine reality must structurally precede the physical implementation of sacred law. Therefore, before the divine text outlines the branches of worship (*furuʿ*), it meticulously anchors the human heart in the primary roots of faith (*usul*).

This intrinsic relationship between foundational scriptural knowledge and subsequent religious obligation is illustrated in the following verses, where Allah Most High says:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

"Know, therefore, that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah."
(Qur'an 47:19)

This verse begins with knowledge before action, indicating that sound belief must precede worship.

Allah also says:

أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"Can there be any doubt concerning Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?"
(Qur'an 14:10)

And Allah says:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All of them believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers."
(Qur'an 2:285)

These verses demonstrate that faith is built upon knowledge, certainty, and belief in the unseen realities revealed by Allah.

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of creed is also clearly shown in the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ. The Sunnah does not just give us extra details about everyday religious laws (*furuʿ*); it serves as the ultimate living explanation of the primary foundations of faith (*usul*). In the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ, inner faith (*iman*) was always established first as the necessary foundation for outer actions (*islam*). To give the community of believers a clear guide, the Prophet ﷺ simplified the vast realities of the unseen world into distinct, easy-to-understand pillars of faith. This structure ensures that a believer's inner faith is correct and secure before they begin focusing on outer physical actions.

The clear prophetic text that maps out these core beliefs is preserved in the following famous narration, where 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه reported:

> **"One day, while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, a man came to us with exceedingly white clothes and exceedingly black hair. No signs of travel were visible upon him, and none of us knew him. He sat before the Prophet ﷺ and said: 'Inform me about faith (iman).' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: 'It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in divine decree, its good and its evil.'"**
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 8.

This famous Hadith of Jibril serves as one of the foundational texts of Islamic theology and establishes the six pillars of faith that will structure this book.

The Epistemological Hierarchy and Typology of Transmission

To fully comprehend how the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition handles scriptural evidence, one must understand the school's unique and rigorous epistemological hierarchy. Unlike schools that treat all authentic text variants uniformly in matters of dogma, classical Hanafi theologians establish a strict structural distinction between the strength of transmission (*Thubut*) and the clarity of meaning (*Dalalah*). In the foundational framework of Imam Abu Hanifah and his direct intellectual heirs, a text must possess both absolute authenticity in its historical transmission and definitive clarity in its linguistic meaning to establish a core article of faith (*Asl al-ʿAqidah*), the denial of which constitutes blasphemy (*Kufr*).

To navigate this landscape, the school categorizes scriptural transmission into two primary epistemological source types:

- **Mutawatir (Mass-Transmitted Evidence)**: A text is deemed *mutawatir* when it is transmitted by such a vast, continuous multitude of narrators in every single generation that it is logically and structurally impossible for them to have colluded upon a fabrication.

- **Epistemic Value**: Within Hanafi epistemology, the *Mutawatir* text—headlined by the Holy Qur'an itself and mass-transmitted Prophetic traditions—yields absolute, definitive knowledge (*Ilm Qat'i* or *Yaqin*). It bypasses the need for critical human verification because its historical validity is completely undeniable.

- **Theological Application**: Consequently, the core pillars of Islamic theology, such as the absolute Oneness of Allah (*Tawhid*), the finality of Prophethood, and the bodily resurrection, are derived exclusively from these *qat'i* sources.

- **Ahad (Solitary or Isolated Evidence)**: An *Ahad* narration is an authentic text that, despite being fully verified through a sound chain of individual narrators (*Sahih*), lacks the historical mass-transmission of the *mutawatir*.

- **Epistemic Value**: In Hanafi theological methodology, a solitary report yields probable or speculative knowledge (*Ilm Zanni*). While highly binding and authoritative in the realm of legal practice and sacred law (*Furuʿ al-Fiqh*), an *Ahad* tradition possesses structural limitations within the realm of core creed.

- **Theological Application**: Because it lacks absolute historical certainty, the Hanafi school establishes that an *Ahad* report cannot be utilised to formulate or legislate a fundamental pillar of faith that dictates a person's entry into or exit from Islam.

  This epistemological limitation, however, is never a dismissal or rejection of Prophetic authority; rather, it is a safeguard designed to preserve the divine purity of orthodox dogma. The Hanafi-Maturidi tradition systematically

accepts authentic *Ahad* traditions to elucidate the secondary details and descriptions of faith (*Furuʿ al-ʿAqidah*), particularly within the realm of transmitted eschatological realities (*Sam'iyyat*). Detailed descriptions of the punishment of the grave, the specific characteristics of the Balance (*Mizan*), and the details of the Fountain (*Hawd*) are firmly embraced and affirmed because they amplify and clarify the core principles already established by mass-transmitted revelation. By maintaining this sophisticated taxonomy, Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi successfully guarded the tradition against the excessive rationalism of the Mu'tazilah—who rejected *Ahad* narrations entirely—while simultaneously protecting the boundaries of faith from the theological recklessness of literalist factions who weaponised isolated texts to excommunicate mainstream Muslims.

The Qur'anic Basis for Verifying Knowledge

The strict distinction that Hanafi-Maturidi theologians draw between mass-transmitted (*mutawatir*) and solitary (*ahad*) reports is not an intellectual innovation. Rather, it is a direct implementation of the epistemological rules laid down by Allah Most High in the Holy Qur'an. The divine text repeatedly warns believers against using conjecture, probability, or speculative assumptions (*zann*) when formulating the core articles of faith. Absolute certainty (*yaqin*) is the only acceptable currency in the realm of creed (*usul*).

To prove that speculation can never serve as a foundation for core dogma, we point to the explicit declarations of the Qur'an. Allah Most High says:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا ۚ إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا

"And most of them follow not except assumption. Indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all."

(Qur'an 10:36)

In another powerful rebuke of those who build their beliefs on speculative or unverified claims, Allah says:

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنفُسُ ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُم مِّن رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ

"They follow not except assumption and what their souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance."

(Qur'an 53:23)

Because a solitary (*ahad*) Hadith is narrated by a single individual—or a small chain of individuals—there remains a mathematical and human possibility of an error, oversight, or a misunderstanding in its transmission, even if the narrator is completely trustworthy. Therefore, while a sound *ahad* narration yields a high degree of probability (*zann al-ghalib*) that is perfectly sufficient for practical legal rulings (*furuʿ*), it does not provide the absolute, ironclad certainty required to establish core theological doctrines. To base a fundamental pillar of faith—the denial of which expels a person from Islam—on a solitary report would violate these explicit Qur'anic prohibitions against following speculation in matters of ultimate truth.

The Scriptural Requirement for Verification and Multiple Witnesses

The Holy Qur'an further demonstrates that the testimony of a single person, no matter how upright, is textually insufficient to settle monumental matters without external verification or a specific number of witnesses. The divine law deliberately puts structural safeguards in place to ensure that truth is never compromised by the limitations of an isolated human voice.

For ordinary financial and social transactions, Allah establishes a minimum baseline of multiple witnesses, stating:

وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ

"And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men."

(Qur'an 2:282)

When it comes to grave legal accusations that carry severe societal and spiritual consequences, the Qur'an raises this threshold even higher,

requiring a "magic number" of four upright witnesses to establish the absolute certainty of the claim:

لَّوْلَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ عِندَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

"Why did they not produce for it four witnesses? And when they do not produce the witnesses, then it is they, in the sight of Allah, who are the liars."

(Qur'an 24:13)

Hanafi theologians argue a powerful logical point from these verses: If the divine law requires two or four separate witnesses just to confirm a financial debt or a moral accusation in a worldly court, how can a single, isolated narration be considered sufficient on its own to establish a cosmic, eternal pillar of creed regarding the Attributes of Allah or the unseen world? The hierarchy of evidence used by the Hanafi school simply reflects this deep Qur'anic caution.

The Methodology of the Salaf: The Precedent of Hazrat 'Umar

This meticulous approach to verifying isolated reports is the exact methodology practiced by the righteous predecessors (*Salaf al-Salih*), spearheaded by the senior Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. The historical record proves that the Companions themselves did not accept solitary reports blindly when establishing important matters, even though every single Companion (*Sahabi*) was universally considered upright (*ʿadil*) and trustworthy.

The most famous historical precedent for this is the strict practice of the Second Caliph, Hazrat 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه. On a famous occasion, the Companion Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه came to the door of 'Umar, knocked three times, and received no reply, so he turned to leave. 'Umar later called him back and asked why he left. Abu Musa replied that he was

following a command of the Prophet ﷺ: *"If one of you seeks permission three times and it is not granted, let him return."*

Despite knowing the stellar character and unassailable loyalty of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Hazrat 'Umar refused to accept this solitary statement on its own. He famously demanded:

"By Allah, you must either bring clear proof and a witness for this, or I shall make an example of you!"

Abu Musa had to go to a gathering of the Companions, where Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضي الله عنه stepped forward to testify that he had also heard the Prophet ﷺ utter those exact words. Only after a second Companion corroborated the report did Hazrat 'Umar accept the Hadith. 'Umar later clarified his stance, stating that he did not doubt Abu Musa's honesty, but he feared that people would begin attributing unverified things to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ if isolated claims went unchecked.

This historical reality shatters the modern claim that the Hanafi-Maturidi methodology represents a "rejection of Hadith." On the contrary, Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi are following the exact footprint of Hazrat 'Umar and the major *Sahabah*. If Hazrat 'Umar required a second witness to accept a simple Prophetic statement regarding standard social etiquette, it is an absolute religious necessity for us to require mass-transmission (*tawatur*) before attributing a core doctrine to the divine creed of Islam.

The Robustness of the Hanafi-Maturidi Paradigm

The Hanafi-Maturidi methodology stands as the most robust, internally consistent, and scripturally faithful framework in Islamic history. Far from rejecting the Sunnah, it protects the Sunnah from being distorted by human error. By accepting *ahad* narrations for secondary details of the unseen (*furuʿ al-ʿaqidah*) while demanding *mutawatir* clarity for the core pillars (*asl al-ʿaqidah*), the school strikes a perfect balance. It perfectly honours the warning of the Qur'an against following speculation, aligns flawlessly with the

cautious practice of the *Salaf*, and ensures that the sacred creed of the global Muslim community remains anchored only in absolute, unshakeable certainty.

The Crucial Distinction Between Authenticity and Application

A common point of confusion in modern times is the assumption that if a Hadith is graded as authentic (*Sahih*), it must immediately be acted upon as an absolute rule of practice or belief. In the highly sophisticated framework of Hanafi *Usul al-Fiqh* (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence), this view is considered academically incomplete. Classifying a Hadith as *Sahih* simply means that the chain of narrators is unbroken and the individuals in that chain were deemed trustworthy according to the specific criteria of the individual Hadith scholar who evaluated it.

This distinction is incredibly important because there is no such thing as a universally unanimous *Sahih* catalog; Hadith scholars frequently held vastly different opinions regarding the reliability of a narrator or the hidden defects (*ʿilal*) in a text. A grading of *Sahih* merely verifies the *history* of the transmission based on a particular scholar's evaluation system. It does not automatically determine the text's theological weight, its legal status, or its correct interpretation.

To understand why a *Sahih* text is not blindly applied to doctrine or law, we can analyze several critical factors established by the Hanafi masters:

- **The Precedent of Structural Verification**: As seen previously with Hazrat 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the senior Companions themselves did not automatically act upon an isolated narration, even when spoken by a trustworthy fellow Companion, without corroboration or additional witnesses. If the Second Caliph applied such caution to the *Sahabah*—who possessed the highest spiritual integrity in human history—it is an absolute

necessity to be cautious with a lone narration compiled by a scholar writing two or three centuries later. No matter how brilliant a later compiler was, their source chain simply cannot match the firsthand reliability of the immediate prophetic circle.

- **The Disconnect Between Narration and Personal Practice (*Amal al-Rawi*):** A foundational rule in Hanafi jurisprudence dictates that if a Companion narrates a prophetic command but subsequently acts or issues a legal verdict (*fatwa*) contrary to it, the application of that Hadith is suspended. The rationale is profound: a Companion of pristine integrity would never knowingly violate a binding prophetic order. Therefore, their deviation in practice proves they possessed contextual knowledge—such as witnessing a later abrogation, an implicit exception, or understanding the original command as a non-obligatory recommendation. The classic example of this is the *Sahih* narration regarding a dog licking a utensil, where the text specifies washing it seven times. While Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (ra) transmitted this exact seven-wash narration, verified historical transmissions prove that in his own judicial practice, he washed the utensil only three times. Because the implementation of the Sahabah represents the living application of the law, the Hanafi school prioritizes the Companion's definitive action over the literal wording of their isolated report, ruling that washing three times is sufficient.

- **The Reality of Abrogation (*Naskh*)**: A Hadith may be completely authentic in its chain, but its ruling may have been later cancelled or replaced by the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime as the divine message developed. Without *Usul al-Fiqh*, a reader might mistakenly adopt a practiced rule that the Prophet ﷺ himself ultimately retired.

- **Historical Context and Specificity**: Many authentic statements were intended strictly for a specific situation, a unique period of time, or a particular group of people. Treating a contextual, localized prophetic command as a universal, eternal law causes massive systemic errors.

- **The Weight of Conflicting Evidence**: An isolated *Sahih* Hadith might contradict a clear, mass-transmitted practice of the community, an established legal principle, or a direct Qur'an verse. In the Hanafi school, a solitary report can never override stronger, more established streams of evidence.

- **The Necessity of Non-Literal Interpretation**: Many authentic traditions utilize allegorical or metaphorical language. Reading them with rigid literalism—especially regarding descriptions of the unseen world or the Divine—leads directly to anthropomorphism and severe theological deviations.

The True Balance Between Intellect and Revelation

The final pillar of the Hanafi-Maturidi approach to knowledge is the role of sound reason (ʿ*Aql*). One of Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's greatest contributions to Islamic thought was showing that true revelation and sound human intelligence are completely harmonious. They are not enemies; rather, they are partners meant to work together.

In our tradition, the human mind is treated as a beautiful, God-given tool. Far from being a human innovation, the use of intellect is a direct command from Allah. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah explicitly highlights the gift of intellect and the capacity for reasoned articulation as a primary favor bestowed upon humanity at creation.

In Surah al-Rahman, Allah Most High says:

خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ * عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

"He created man, [and] taught him eloquent speech [and reasoned articulation]."

(Qur'an 55:3-4)

By giving humanity *Bayan*, Allah did not just grant us the ability to speak words, but the cognitive power to reason, distinguish between truth and falsehood, and articulate reality clearly.

Furthermore, the Qur'an is filled with a consistent pattern of verses that command human beings to ponder, reflect, and investigate matters intellectually rather than accepting beliefs blindly. Allah frequently rebukes those who refuse to use their minds, asking:

أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ
"Will you not then reflect?"
(Qur'an 6:50)

In another verse, Allah explicitly states that the revelation itself was sent down precisely so that our intellectual faculties could engage with it:

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ
"Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand [and use your reason]."
(Qur'an 12:2)

To explain how this scripturally mandated reason works alongside revelation, the school rejects two extreme and incorrect viewpoints:

- **Against Blind Fideism**: This is the mistake of completely shutting down the human mind. Fideists believe that humans should never use logic or reasoning to understand faith, demanding instead that people blindly follow text literalism. Imam al-Maturidi rejected this, pointing to the verses above to show that refusing to think actually goes against the direct commands of Allah.

- **Against Excessive Rationalism**: This is the opposite mistake, practiced by groups like the Mu'tazilah, who placed human logic *above* divine revelation. They believed human reason could judge or reject God's laws if it did not understand them. Imam al-Maturidi corrected this by showing that human

intelligence has natural boundaries. Just as our physical eyes cannot see past the horizon, our human minds cannot cross into the unseen world (*Ghayb*) to independently figure out the true nature of God or the reasons behind His hidden decree.

Therefore, the Hanafi-Maturidi methodology employs a perfectly balanced approach: **reason is used in absolute service of revelation.** Human intellect is fully capable of recognizing that God exists by observing the creation, and it is capable of verifying the truth of a Prophet's miracles. However, once the mind establishes that the Prophet ﷺ is speaking the absolute truth from God, the intellect willingly submits to the details of the unseen world brought by revelation. By keeping this beautiful balance, the school satisfies the human mind without ever stripping revelation of its divine authority.

Discussion

The study of Islamic creed (*ʿaqidah*) is never a purely academic exercise or a mere collection of historical facts. Rather, it is the pursuit of absolute cognitive certainty (*yaqin*) regarding the unseen realities revealed by Allah and delivered by His Messenger ﷺ. In the contemporary world, we face a unique crisis: a massive surplus of unverified information coupled with a severe shortage of foundational certainty. A person may accumulate immense worldly wealth, high social status, or vast secular knowledge, but none of these achievements can secure his spiritual salvation if his underlying beliefs about his Creator are broken or unsound. This is precisely why the classical Hanafi-Maturidi scholars systematically positioned the study of creed before the study of religious law and daily practice. If the theological foundation is unstable, the entire structure of a person's religious practice is at constant risk of collapse.

Furthermore, mastering a disciplined theological methodology is a believer's ultimate shield against modern doubt and intellectual confusion. When we

look back at the history of Islamic thought, major theological disputes and deviant sects did not emerge by accident. They arose because individuals either completely abandoned scriptural revelation for unanchored human speculation, or they read isolated textual proofs literally without a robust, qualifying framework.

Human intellect (*ʿaql*) is a powerful, God-given tool, but it has natural, built-in limitations. Just as human eyesight cannot see past a physical horizon despite being completely healthy, the human mind cannot independently cross into the realm of the unseen world (*Ghayb*) to speculate about the exact modality (*kayfiyyah*) of the Divine Essence or the hidden wisdoms of the Divine Decree (*Qadar*).

By establishing a clear, scriptural hierarchy of evidence—demanding absolute mass-transmission (*tawatur*) for core beliefs while accepting verified isolated reports (*ahad*) to clarify secondary descriptions—the Hanafi-Maturidi paradigm provides a bulletproof intellectual framework. This framework allows a modern Muslim to navigate complex questions about Allah, revelation, prophethood, and the Hereafter with total clarity. It completely satisfies the human intellect without ever compromising the absolute purity and supremacy of divine revelation. Ultimately, correct creed anchors the wandering mind in immutable, timeless truths, ensuring that a believer's internal conviction matches his outward submission to Allah.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The transition from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to *Kitab al-Tawhid* represents the organic development of a single, unified tradition. To fully grasp why creed matters, one must understand how these two foundational texts operate, how they complement one another, and how they provide a complete framework for navigating modern uncertainty.

1. The Foundational Maxims of Imam Abu Hanifah

Imam Abu Hanifah's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* provides the structural bedrock for this entire tradition. Writing at a time when the first major theological deviations were beginning to fracture the unity of the Ummah, the Imam's primary concern was to draw clear boundaries around orthodox Sunni belief. He did this not through lengthy philosophical treatises, but through concise, definitive maxims.

The primary insight of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* is its classification of knowledge. By defining theology as "the Greater Understanding" (*al-fiqh al-akbar*), Imam Abu Hanifah established that knowing *Who* you worship must structurally precede knowing *how* to worship. The text focuses heavily on asserting the absolute oneness of Allah (*tawhid*), His pre-eternal attributes, and the reality of faith (*iman*). For Imam Abu Hanifah, faith is an internal conviction and an outward verbal testimony that does not inherently increase or decrease in its core essence. This maxim provided a crucial anchor against extremist views of his era and remains a vital source of clarity today.

2. The Systematic Codification of Imam al-Maturidi

As Islamic civilisation expanded and encountered complex foreign philosophies, later generations required more than concise summaries of faith —they needed a rigorous methodology to defend those truths. This is where Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's *Kitab al-Tawhid* becomes indispensable. Imam al-Maturidi did not invent a new creed; rather, he built an intellectual fortress around the foundational maxims left behind by Imam Abu Hanifah. The defining insight of *Kitab al-Tawhid* is its establishment of a rigorous Sunni epistemology. Imam al-Maturidi argued that confusion arises when people use the wrong tools to find the truth. He systematically proved that human knowledge is acquired through three primary channels:

- **The Sound Senses (*al-ʿiyan*):** The primary tool for observing and navigating the physical universe.

- **True Reports (*al-akhbar*):** Historical transmission, which reaches its absolute peak in the divine revelation of the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah.
- **Reason (*al-ʿaql*):** The intellectual faculty required to process sensory data, comprehend the deep meanings of revelation, and recognise the necessity of a Creator.

3. The Perfect Harmony of Revelation and Reason

Together, these two masters teach that authentic revelation and sound reason are fundamentally harmonious. In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, reason is never placed above revelation, nor is it discarded in favour of blind imitation. Instead, reason functions in direct service of revelation. It is the tool given by Allah to unlock the profound depth of the sacred texts, to demonstrate the logical necessity of the cosmos having a Creator, and to dismantle the flawed arguments of those who promote doubt.

In an age characterised by an abundance of information but a scarcity of wisdom, this balanced methodology is precisely what allows a believer to advance. It transforms faith from mere inherited habit into deep, unshakeable intellectual and spiritual certainty. By studying these insights across the following chapters, the common Muslim, the student, and the teacher alike will gain a systematic framework capable of clearing away modern confusion and anchoring the heart in foundational truth.

Conclusion

Creed is the foundation upon which every aspect of Islam rests. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, and Imam al-Maturidi's *Kitab al-Tawhid* all emphasise that sound belief must precede sound action. For this reason, the study of creed remains among the most important pursuits for every Muslim seeking certainty in faith and success in the Hereafter.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 2: How Do We Know Allah Exists?

The existence of Allah is the foundation upon which all other matters of faith are built. Before discussing revelation, prophethood, the Hereafter, or divine decree, a person must first recognise the existence of the Creator.

Unlike some philosophical traditions that demand blind acceptance, Islam repeatedly invites mankind to reflect upon the world around them. The Qur'an calls attention to the heavens and the earth, the alternation of night and day, the order of creation, and even the human being himself as signs pointing towards the existence of Allah.

For this reason, the scholars of Islam taught that belief in Allah is supported by both revelation and sound reason. The two are not in conflict; rather, they complement one another. Revelation guides the intellect, while the intellect recognises the signs of the Creator.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and day are signs for people of understanding."
(Qur'an 3:190)

Allah also says:

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ

"Were they created from nothing, or are they themselves the creators?"
(Qur'an 52:35)

And He says:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

"We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth."
(Qur'an 41:53)

These verses direct mankind towards reflection. The created world is not meaningless; rather, it serves as evidence of the wisdom, power, and existence of its Creator.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"Every child is born upon the fitrah. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."**
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Funerals (*Kitab al-Jana'iz*), Hadith no. 1358; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Divine Decree (*Kitab al-Qadar*), Hadith no. 2658.

The scholars explained that the *fitrah* refers to the natural disposition upon which human beings are created. Included within this disposition is an innate

recognition of the Creator and a natural inclination towards worshipping Him.

Discussion

When a person observes the world around him, he encounters order, balance, and purpose. The movements of the celestial bodies follow precise laws. Living organisms possess remarkable complexity. The natural world operates according to patterns that sustain life and maintain stability.

Such order naturally raises a question: can a universe characterised by such precision and harmony be the result of chance alone?

Islam answers this question by directing mankind towards the Creator. Just as a building points to a builder and a book points to an author, creation points towards its Creator.

This does not mean that every person arrives at belief through identical reasoning. Some are guided through reflection upon the natural world, others through contemplation of revelation, and others through personal experience. Nevertheless, all paths ultimately lead to the same conclusion: the universe did not create itself.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The theological methodologies of Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi complement one another perfectly when addressing the question of divine existence. While the former provides an accessible, logically flawless analogy rooted in everyday observation, the latter provides a rigorous epistemological defense that addresses the deepest roots of philosophical skepticism.

1. The Teleological Logic of Imam Abu Hanifah

A famous historical account records that when theological skeptics challenged Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah to prove the existence of the Creator, he did not rely on abstract philosophy. Instead, he directed their attention to the concept of order, purpose, and deliberate design (*dalil al-itqan*).

He asked them to consider a massive ship filled with cargo navigating the turbulent waters of the Tigris River. He posed a simple question: could any rational mind accept that this vessel loaded its own cargo, steered itself across the shifting currents, balanced itself against the wind, and arrived perfectly at its destination without a captain, a crew, or a builder?

When his interlocutors rejected this notion as an absolute intellectual impossibility, the Imam delivered his definitive critique. He observed that if a simple wooden ship structurally requires a deliberate maker and a conscious navigator to exist and function, then the cosmic order—the unyielding movements of the celestial bodies, the turning of the seasons, and the precise laws governing life on Earth—demands a supreme Creator with infinitely greater necessity. This insight teaches that the universe is a visible testament to purposeful design, rendering blind chance a rational absurdity.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Argument from Material Change

In *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi takes these foundational principles and structures them into a formal intellectual defense of Sunni orthodoxy, utilising what scholars classify as the argument from temporal origination (*dalil al-huduth*). The core insight of Imam al-Maturidi's approach rests upon a universal truth: everything within the observable cosmos is inherently bound to change.

He demonstrates that the universe is not static. Human beings transition through distinct phases of birth, growth, decay, and death. Plants emerge from seeds, flourish, and wither back into the earth. Even the grandest

inanimate structures decompose over time. Imam al-Maturidi argues that because the components of the universe are constantly undergoing alteration, shifting states, and relying on external factors to exist, they cannot be eternal or self-sustaining.

Logically, anything that undergoes change must have a beginning, and anything that has a beginning requires an originator to bring it out of non-existence into existence. From this, he proves that the universe cannot be the source of its own being; it must possess a primary, uncaused Creator who exists completely independent of the material cosmos, outside the boundaries of time and change.

3. The Synthetic Framework of Both Imams

Together, these two masters bridge the gap between simple observation and rigorous intellectual inquiry. They prove that true reason does not lead away from revelation; rather, it serves as the exact mechanism through which the mind validates scriptural claims. By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's focus on structural harmony with Imam al-Maturidi's analysis of physical contingency, this tradition offers the common Muslim, the student, and the teacher a complete intellectual shield. It proves that the existence of Allah is not a matter of blind fideism, but the ultimate conclusion of sound, uncorrupted human intellect.

Conclusion

The existence of Allah is established through revelation, reason, and reflection upon the signs found throughout creation. The Qur'an repeatedly calls mankind to observe the world around them, while Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi demonstrate that sound reasoning leads to the same conclusion. The universe points beyond itself to an eternal Creator, and that Creator is Allah.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 3: Allah Existed Before Creation

Having established the existence of Allah, we must now consider one of the most important principles of Islamic theology:

Everything that exists within the universe has a beginning. Human beings are born, stars are formed, plants grow, and civilisations emerge and decline. The created world is characterised by change, dependency, and temporality.

Allah, however, is not part of creation.

He did not come into existence after non-existence, nor is He dependent upon anything besides Himself. Rather, He is the Eternal Creator upon whom all creation depends.

Understanding this distinction between the Creator and creation is essential for a sound understanding of Islamic creed.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is Knowing of all things."
(Qur'an 57:3)

The scholars explained that Allah's name **Al-Awwal (The First)** means that there was nothing before Him, while **Al-Akhir (The Last)** means that there will be nothing after Him.

Allah also says:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

"Everything shall perish except Him."
(Qur'an 28:88)

And He says:

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

"Allah is the Self-Sufficient."
(Qur'an 112:2)

These verses establish a clear distinction between Allah and creation. Creation is dependent, temporary, and in need. Allah is eternal, independent, and self-sufficient.

Prophetic Evidence

'Imran ibn Husayn رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**Allah was, and there was nothing besides Him.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Beginning of Creation (*Kitab Bad' al-Khalq*), Hadith no. 3191.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"O Allah, You are the First, and there is nothing before You. You are the Last, and there is nothing after You."**
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness (*Kitab al-Dhikr wa al-Du'a*), Hadith no. 2713.

These narrations leave no doubt that Allah existed before all creation and remains eternal after the passing of creation.

Discussion

Human beings often think in terms of beginnings and endings because everything within their experience possesses both.

When we encounter a building, we assume it was built.

When we read a book, we assume it was written.

When we meet a person, we know they were born.

Creation is characterised by contingency; it depends upon causes and conditions for its existence.

Allah is fundamentally different.

If Allah required a creator, then that creator would be more deserving of worship than Him. If every creator required another creator, an endless chain would result and nothing would ever come into existence. Therefore, reason itself points towards the necessity of an Eternal Creator who is not created and whose existence depends upon nothing.

This Eternal Creator is Allah. For this reason, Islamic theology distinguishes between the Creator and creation. The Creator is eternal and independent, whereas creation is temporal and dependent.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The theological parameters established by Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi regarding divine priority are vital for protecting the mind from anthropomorphism and philosophical confusion. Together, their texts form a complete defense of Allah's absolute eternity (*al-Azal*) and self-sufficiency (*al-Qiyam bi-nafsih*).

1. The Pre-Eternal Perfection of Imam Abu Hanifah

Among the most critical and definitive statements found in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* is Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah's declaration: *"Allah existed before things existed."* This concise maxim serves as an unshakeable baseline for Sunni orthodoxy. It explicitly establishes that Allah did not acquire the status of Lordship (*Rububiyyah*) after creating the universe, nor did He obtain any new perfection through the act of creation.

Imam Abu Hanifah teaches that Allah has always existed with His names and His essential and active attributes (*sifat al-dhat wa-sifat al-fi'l*). His knowledge, power, and creative will are not newly acquired traits brought about by the emergence of the cosmos; they are pre-eternal (*azali*), completely free from the boundaries of temporal beginnings. For the Imam, to suggest that Allah acquired a new attribute upon creating is to imply a prior state of alteration or deficiency in the Divine Essence—a position that classical Hanafi creed rejects entirely. Allah was the Creator before He created, and He was the Provider before He provided.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Refutation of Infinite Regress

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this principle in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by providing the absolute rational proof for divine priority. He observes that everything within our sensory experience is contingent—meaning it requires an external cause to bring it into being, sustain it, and define its limits. Because the entire material universe is composed of these shifting, dependent parts, the universe as an aggregate whole must also be contingent and have a distinct point of origin.

To anchor this reality for the reader, Imam al-Maturidi applies a flawless rational rule to refute the concept of an infinite chain of dependent creators (*al-tasalsul*). If Creator A required Creator B to exist, and Creator B required Creator C, extending backward infinitely, no primary point of origin would ever be reached. If no primary cause exists to launch the sequence, then nothing would exist today. Since the universe clearly does exist, the mind is forced to recognise that the chain must stop at a primary, uncaused, eternal Necessary Being (*Wajib al-Wujud*). This primary source is Allah, who exists completely independent of time, change, or external causation.

3. The Rejection of Temporal Occurrences (*Hawadith*)

A foundational insight shared by both imams is that because Allah existed before all things without requiring a prior cause, He cannot be subject to temporal occurrences (*hawadith*). In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, anything that experiences a new state, a shift in emotion, or physical movement must have transitioned from one state to another. This transition requires a time frame and an external factor to cause the change.
Because Allah is the pre-eternal First (*Al-Awwal*) who preceded time, space, and matter, He is completely free from the characteristics of creation. While the universe is in a constant state of becoming, Allah is unchangingly perfect. This insight provides the reader with a clear intellectual metric: whatever is

subject to change or time is created, and the Creator of time cannot be bound by it.

The Prophetic Metric of Immutability: The Path of Ibrahim (as)

This unyielding metaphysical reality regarding the absolute immutability of the Divine Essence is beautifully illustrated in the Holy Qur'an through the historic narrative of Prophet Ibrahim (as) and his interaction with the celestial bodies. When observing the rising and setting of the stars, the moon, and the sun, Ibrahim (as) delivered a definitive structural critique to his idolatrous community, as recorded by Allah Most High:

فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ

"And when it set, he said: I love not those that set."
(Qur'an 6:76)

In the rigorous theological exegesis (*ta'wīl*) of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, this narrative must never be misinterpreted as a record of a Prophet experiencing personal theological doubt or undergoing a fluid transition from cosmic skepticism to belief. Such a reading severely violates the doctrinal principle of prophetic impeccability (*ʿiṣmah*). Rather, Ibrahim (as) was demonstrating a masterclass in divine epistemology and rational deduction to a community enslaved by material physics.

By highlighting the physical setting (*al-ufūl*) and the constant spatial movement of these grand celestial structures, he established an unshakeable intellectual baseline: anything that is subject to change, physical transition, structural limits, or translocation from one state or space to another cannot be the pre-eternal, uncaused Creator.

Dismantling Modern Literalist Contradictions

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly commands the global Ummah to follow the pure, unadulterated monotheistic path of Ibrahim (*Millat Ibrāhīma Ḥanīfā*). Therefore, this specific prophetic methodology—historically codified by theologians as the Argument from Celestial Fluctuation (*Dalīl al-Ufūl*)—serves to completely dismantle the self-contradictory arguments of modern pseudo-Atharī literalists. These factions frequently assert a highly problematic theological compromise: they will readily admit that Allah existed before the creation of all things without a place, yet they subsequently claim that He moved to establish Himself inside or atop the Throne (*al-ʿArsh*), and that He now literally descends and ascends through the lower physical skies.

As I have deconstructed and analysed at great length in my specialized text, *Allah Exists Without a Place: A Refutation of Anthropomorphism*, true reason (*ʿaql*) and authentic revelation (*naql*) completely converge on this specific point. The universe is defined as a complex aggregate of constant fluctuation, accidents, and states of becoming. Conversely, the Creator of the universe is defined by absolute self-sufficiency (*al-Qiyām bi-nafsih*) and complete unchangeableness.

From a metaphysical standpoint, the very nature of change or movement inherently denotes a state of dependency and imperfection. A transition from one state to another implies that the changing entity either possessed a deficiency it sought to rectify, or lacked a perfection it required to attain. For an object to move, change its attributes, or alter its relationship to space, it must be acted upon or driven by a need to realize a potential it does not currently possess.

Consequently, a self-sufficient God (*al-Ghanī*) is entirely free from any need for change, transition, or spatial movement. Just as Allah existed before the creation of space, time, matter, and the Throne without requiring a location or undergoing movement, He remains eternally as He was. The Creator of space

cannot be contained by it, and the Sovereign who brought time into existence cannot be bound by its passing or subject to its transitions.

From the standpoint of classical Usul, to assert that the Almighty transitioned from a non-spatial existence to a spatial localisation, or that He undergoes literal downward or upward movement, is a severe theological failure. It projects the exact flawed, changing, and temporary characteristics of created matter (*ḥawādith*) onto the Divine Essence. An entity that physically moves from point A to point B must inherently be smaller than the space it moves through, bounded by measurable dimensions, and dependent on a structural timeline to execute that movement.

By declaring "I love not those that set," Prophet Ibrahim (as) established that any entity bound by spatial boundaries, local movements, or translocation belongs strictly to the realm of dependent, temporal creation. This insight equips the reader with an absolute intellectual shield: whatever is subject to change or translocation is created, and the majestic Creator transcends the material limitations of the cosmos entirely, rendering it utterly unworthy of divine lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*).

Conclusion

The belief that Allah existed before creation forms the foundation of a sound understanding of Islamic theology. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all affirm that Allah alone is eternal, without beginning or end. Everything besides Him is created, dependent, and in need of Him. Recognising this distinction between the Creator and creation is essential for understanding the nature of Allah and the reality of the world around us.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 4: Nothing Resembles Allah

After establishing that Allah exists and that He existed before all creation, we arrive at another fundamental principle of Islamic theology: Allah is completely unlike His creation. This principle lies at the absolute heart of Islamic creed and protects a believer from misunderstanding the nature of the Creator.

Human beings naturally understand the world through comparison. When we encounter something unfamiliar, we often describe it by comparing it to something we already know. This cognitive method may be useful when discussing created, material things, but it cannot be applied to Allah Most High. Allah is unique. He has no equal, no likeness, and no peer. Nothing in creation resembles Him, and He does not resemble anything in creation. For this reason, the scholars regarded this principle as one of the definitive foundations of divine transcendence (*tanzīh*).

Qur'anic Evidence

The foundational status of absolute transcendence is explicitly dictated by the textual transmission (*naql*) of divine revelation. Allah Most High says:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing."
(Qur'an 42:11)

This verse is among the most important texts in Islamic theology. It establishes a perfect balance, affirming two realities simultaneously: Allah possesses real attributes, such as hearing and seeing, yet nothing resembles Him in those attributes.

Allah also says:

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

"**And there is none comparable to Him.**"
(Qur'an 112:4)

And He says:

هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا

"**Do you know of anyone comparable to Him?**"
(Qur'an 19:65)

The answer is self-evident. There is absolutely nothing comparable to Allah.

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of *tanzīh* is also clearly shown in the living explanation of the Prophetic Sunnah. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"**Allah does not sleep, and it is not befitting for Him to sleep.**"

Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 179.

This *hadith* demonstrates a critical principle: Allah is not described by the deficiencies, biological requirements, and limitations found in creation.

Furthermore, Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"**The right hand of Allah is full and is not diminished by spending.**"

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Tawhid (*Kitab al-Tawhid*), Hadith no. 7411; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Zakah (*Kitab al-Zakah*), Hadith no. 993.
The scholars explained that texts concerning the attributes of Allah must be understood in a manner that befits His majesty while preserving the primary rule established by the Qur'an: *"There is nothing whatsoever like Him."*

Discussion

One of the greatest errors in theology is to imagine Allah in the likeness of creation. Human beings possess bodies, occupy space, experience weakness, and undergo temporal change. These characteristics belong strictly to created matter. Allah is the Creator of bodies, space, weakness, and change. Therefore, He cannot be described by the structural limitations of His own creation.

At the same time, Islam does not deny the attributes that Allah affirmed for Himself. Rather, Muslims affirm them while recognising that they are unlike anything found in creation. Allah hears, but not as we hear. Allah sees, but not as we see. Allah knows, but not as we know. The attribute is firmly affirmed, while physical resemblance is completely denied. This balance distinguishes the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah from both anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) on one extreme and the total deletion of divine attributes (*taʿṭīl*) on the other.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The insights found within *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* establish the precise linguistic and intellectual methodology required to maintain divine transcendence while avoiding the twin pitfalls of literal anthropomorphism and total deletion of the attributes.

- **1. The Definitive Distinctions of Imam Abu Hanifah:** Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah places the principle of absolute uniqueness at the very forefront of his text. He states with clarity: *"Allah is not like any of His creation."* He builds upon this baseline by introducing a vital interpretive rule in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*: when Allah references attributes such as His hand (*yad*), His face (*wajh*), or His self (*nafs*) in the Qur'an, these are to be affirmed as actual, pre-eternal attributes (*ṣifāt*) that befit His majesty. Crucially, the Imam notes that these are attributes without a modality (*bilā kayf*). He explicitly cautions that a reader must never interpret these words as physical components or bodily limbs (*jawāriḥ*). For Imam Abu Hanifah, a physical hand implies parts, boundaries, and spatial layout—all of which are properties of created matter. By stating that Allah's attributes are real yet utterly free of human modality, he guards the common Muslim against mental imagery while refusing to strip the sacred text of its stated meanings.

- **2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemology of Tanzīh:** Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi provides the systematic intellectual defense of this position in *Kitab al-Tawhid*. He tackles a fundamental cognitive problem: because human language is born out of our experience with the material world, how can we use human words to describe a transcendent Creator? Imam al-Maturidi solves this by explaining that any apparent linguistic overlap between the Creator and creation exists purely at the level of naming (*fī al-tasmiyah*), not in ultimate reality or essence. When we say a human "knows" or "sees," that knowledge is newly acquired, dependent on sensory organs, and bounded by time. Conversely, when we affirm that Allah is All-Knowing and All-Seeing, His attributes are pre-eternal, independent of physical faculties, and

completely limitless. He argues that true resemblance requires a shared genus or physical essence. Since the universe is inherently temporal (*ḥādith*) and Allah is inherently eternal (*azalī*), any true existential resemblance between the two is an absolute rational and textually untenable impossibility.

- **3. Navigating the Texts of the Attributes:** Together, the two imams equip the student of knowledge and the teacher with a unified rule: whatever occurs to the human mind regarding the reality of Allah, Allah is completely unlike it. The mind can comprehend the existence and meanings of the divine attributes through the light of revelation, but it can never encompass their modality or form, because form belongs strictly to the realm of creation. This balanced methodology allows a believer to confidently recite the scriptural texts of the attributes with deep reverence, secure in the knowledge that the majesty of the Creator remains entirely untouched by the limitations of the cosmos.

- **4. Shaykh Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī and the Modern Critique of Pseudo-Atharī Literalism:** The unyielding lineage of *tanzīh* defended by Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi finds its ultimate modern expression in the work of the monumental Ottoman scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1371 AH). Writing in an era where literalist, anthropomorphic tendencies were being aggressively revived under the self-contradictory banner of pseudo-Atharī or Wahhabī scholarship, al-Kawtharī deployed the full weight of classical Hanafi *Usul* to neutralise this theological drift. Throughout his masterful treatises—such as *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī*—he exposed the linguistic fallacy of the modern literalist approach.

  Shaykh al-Kawtharī argued that the modern literalist demand to read spatial layout, bodily limbs, and physical direction (*jihah*) into the descriptive attributes of Allah is not an adherence to the text, but a radical betrayal of it. He demonstrated that by forcing words like *yad* or *istiwā'* into their material, lexical defaults, modern literalists subvert the primary, immutable Qur'anic

axiom: *"There is nothing whatsoever like Him."* For al-Kawtharī, true adherence to the early generations (*Salaf*) does not mean adopting an illiterate, rigid literalism that traps the mind in mental imagery; rather, it means practising absolute *tafwīḍ* (consigning the modality to Allah) or structured *ta'wīl* (metaphorical interpretation) within the strict boundaries of Arabic eloquence, thereby shielding the common Muslim from the devastating poison of anthropomorphism.

Conclusion

The belief that nothing resembles Allah is among the most important principles of Islamic creed. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam al-Maturidi, and their authentic modern heirs like Shaykh al-Kawtharī all affirm that Allah possesses perfect attributes while remaining utterly distinct from creation. By affirming what Allah revealed about Himself and denying any physical resemblance between the Creator and creation, a believer successfully preserves both the transcendent majesty of Allah and the structural integrity of Islamic theology.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 5: Allah Exists Without Place or Direction

Having established that Allah existed before creation and that nothing resembles Him, we may now consider an important implication of these principles:

Allah exists without place or direction.

This topic has occupied an important place in Islamic theology throughout the centuries because it concerns the relationship between the Creator and creation.

Every created thing occupies a place. Human beings live in homes, travel between locations, and exist within the dimensions of space and time. Place, direction, movement, and physical location are all characteristics of created things.

Allah, however, is the Creator of all things.

Therefore, the characteristics of creation cannot be attributed to Him in the same manner that they are attributed to created beings.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing."
(Qur'an 42:11)

This verse remains the foundation of all discussion concerning the divine attributes. Whatever is affirmed about Allah must be understood in a manner that preserves His absolute uniqueness.

Allah also says:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ

"He is the First and the Last."
(Qur'an 57:3)

As we saw in the chapter 3, Allah existed before all creation. Since place itself is part of creation, Allah existed before place came into existence.

Allah further says:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ

"And He is with you wherever you are."
(Qur'an 57:4)

The scholars explained that this verse refers to Allah's knowledge, power, and awareness, not physical proximity. Allah's knowledge encompasses all things, while He remains utterly unlike His creation.

Prophetic Evidence

'Imran ibn Husayn رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"**Allah was, and there was nothing besides Him.**"

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Beginning of Creation (*Kitab Bad' al-Khalq*), Hadith no. 3191.

This hadith establishes that Allah existed before all created things.

Before the heavens existed, Allah existed.

Before the earth existed, Allah existed.

Before the Throne existed, Allah existed.

Before place and direction existed, Allah existed.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"**O Allah, You are the First, and there is nothing before You.**"

Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness (*Kitab al-Dhikr wa al-Du'a*), Hadith no. 2713.

These narrations establish Allah's pre-eternity and complete independence from creation.

Discussion

When discussing Allah, it is essential to distinguish between the Creator and creation.

Place is a created reality.

Direction is a created reality.

Distance is a created reality.

These concepts only have meaning within the created universe.

Since Allah existed before the universe, He cannot be dependent upon the very things He created.

This does not mean that Allah is absent from creation or unaware of creation. On the contrary, His knowledge encompasses all things, His power extends over all things, and nothing escapes His will.

Rather, it means that Allah's existence is not confined by the limitations that govern created beings. Just as Allah's knowledge is unlike our knowledge and His power is unlike our power, His existence is unlike the existence of created things.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The legacy of Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive framework for understanding divine transcendence (*tanzih*) regarding space and location. By establishing that spatial dimensions are created accidents, their texts protect the believer from mapping material constraints onto the Divine Essence. For an exhaustive, detailed deconstruction of these polemics and historical debates, readers can consult my specialized text on this exact subject, *Allah Exists Without a Place: A Refutation of Anthropomorphism*.

1. The Pre-Spatial Axiom of Imam Abu Hanifah

Among the most critical theological parameters passed down from Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah is his precise declaration: *"Allah existed when there was no place. He existed before creating creation. He existed and there was no 'where' (ayna), no creation, and nothing else."* This formulation serves as a foundational axiom in Hanafi metaphysics. By explicitly denying the concept of a pre-existing spatial "where," the Imam establishes that place (*al-makan*) is not an eternal reality, but a temporally originated boundary.

Imam Abu Hanifah couples this with a vital logical rule: Allah does not undergo alteration (*taghayyur*). If Allah existed without a place before the creation of the universe, He must necessarily exist without a place after its creation. To suggest that Allah became localised or confined within a direction after creating space would imply that the Divine Essence underwent a change in state or acquired a new attribute of dependency. For the Hanafi school, the Creator is completely invariant; changes occur only within the created cosmic order, while the majesty of the Creator remains eternally as it was.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemology of Space

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi expands this extensively in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by analysing the very nature of place and direction. He demonstrates that "place" is structurally defined by boundaries, limits, and the containment of one object inside another. Similarly, "direction" (such as above, below, right, or left) is merely a relative relationship that exists *between* created physical bodies.

Imam al-Maturidi applies a rigorous rational proof: anything that is bounded by a place or localised in a specific direction must possess dimensions, volume, and a physical shape. Such properties belong exclusively to composite material bodies (*ajsam*). Since Chapter 4 established that Allah is

absolutely unique and structurally unlike creation (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*), attributing physical containment or spatial direction to Him is an intellectual and textual impossibility. He concludes that Allah is the Creator of the directions themselves, and the Creator cannot be contained by the very dimensions He brought into existence out of nothingness.

3. Deconstructing Anthropomorphic Misinterpretations

A major focus within this tradition is the thorough dismantling of literalist or anthropomorphic tendencies. Literalist factions often attempt to assign a physical direction or spatial altitude (*ulw*) to Allah, arguing that denying a location to Him is equivalent to denying His existence.

Imam al-Maturidi systematically refutes this by proving that localisation is a sign of deficiency, not perfection. An entity that requires a space is dependent on that space to exist. If it is in one direction, it is inherently absent from another, meaning it is limited and finite. Because Allah is infinite and absolutely self-sufficient (*Al-Samad*), He is entirely free from the properties of occupancy, boundary, or distance.

4. The Linguistic Fallacy of Spatial Containment

Furthermore, a deep linguistic examination reveals that words denoting location are inherently bound to human sensory limits. When literalists insist on applying terms like *al-Arsh* (the Throne) as a physical seat containing the Divine, they fall into a trap of semantic literalism that violates the Arabic language's own rules of eloquence and metaphor. Imam al-Maturidi spent decades debating factions who confused the textual mention of a created reality with the essential nature of the Creator.

The text of *Kitab al-Tawhid* emphasises that spatial references in the Qur'an serve to illustrate majesty, dominion, and unmatched authority (*al-sultan*), rather than to measure physical proximity or outline a boundary. To assert

that Allah physically sits or moves through space implies that the Creator possesses a top, a bottom, boundaries, and measurable dimensions. Sound human intellect immediately rejects this notion, recognising that an entity composed of dimensions requires a designer to define those exact dimensions, thereby stripping that entity of true divinity.

5. Correctly Navigating Transmitted Texts

Together, the two imams equip the teacher and the student of knowledge with a unified methodology for navigating complex scriptural expressions. When encountering texts that mention the Divine Ascent (*al-Istiwa'*) or the Divine Nearness, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition firmly rejects any interpretation that implies physical movement, relocation, or spatial occupancy.

Imam al-Maturidi notes that such literalist interpretations reduce the Transcendent Creator to a localised object in need of a seat or a roof. Instead, this tradition affirms these attributes exactly as Allah revealed them—revering their majestic reality—while completely stripping them of any material modalities or human constraints. They teach that Allah is high above His creation in status, power, and sovereignty, not via physical altitude or spatial distance, maintaining an unyielding balance that preserves both the literal text of revelation and the purity of sound reason

Conclusion

The belief that Allah exists without place or direction follows naturally from the principles established in the previous chapters. Allah existed before creation, nothing resembles Him, and He is not dependent upon the realities that He Himself created. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all affirm the transcendence of Allah while maintaining His nearness through knowledge, power, and mercy.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 6: The Divine Attributes of Allah

After understanding that Allah is unlike His creation and exists without place or direction, we must now examine another essential aspect of Islamic creed:

Allah possesses perfect and eternal attributes.

A person can only know Allah through what He has revealed about Himself. Throughout the Qur'an and Sunnah, Allah describes Himself with names and attributes that reflect His perfection, majesty, wisdom, power, and mercy.

The scholars of Islam unanimously taught that these attributes are real. They are not merely figures of speech, nor are they human inventions. Rather, they are attributes that Allah affirmed for Himself and which must be believed in as befits His majesty.

At the same time, these attributes must never be understood in a manner that resembles the attributes of creation.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

"Allah—there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence."
(Qur'an 2:255)

This verse affirms the attributes of Life and Self-Subsistence.

Allah also says:

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"And He is Knowing of all things."
(Qur'an 57:3)

This verse affirms the attribute of Knowledge.

Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

"Indeed, Allah has power over all things."
(Qur'an 2:20)

This verse affirms the attribute of Power.

And Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

"Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing."
(Qur'an 22:75)

This verse affirms the attributes of Hearing and Seeing.

Throughout the Qur'an, Allah repeatedly introduces Himself through His names and attributes, teaching mankind who He is and how He should be known.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**O Allah, Yours is the praise. You are the Light of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them. Yours is the praise. You are the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Tahajjud (*Kitab al-Tahajjud*), Hadith no. 1120; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of the Prayer of Travellers (*Kitab Salat al-Musafirin*), Hadith no. 769.

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**Allah does not sleep, and it is not befitting for Him to sleep.**"
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 179.

This hadith teaches an important theological principle: imperfections such as sleep, fatigue, weakness, ignorance, and death are impossible for Allah because they contradict divine perfection.

Discussion

The attributes of Allah are among the most important subjects in Islamic theology because they define how Muslims understand their Lord.

When we say that Allah is All-Knowing, we affirm that nothing escapes His knowledge.

When we say that Allah is All-Powerful, we affirm that nothing lies beyond His power.

When we say that Allah is Ever-Living, we affirm that death and non-existence are impossible for Him.

The scholars explained that every attribute of Allah signifies perfection, while every imperfection is impossible for Him.

However, it is equally important to remember that Allah's attributes are not comparable to those of creation.

Human beings possess limited knowledge.

Allah possesses unlimited knowledge.

Human beings possess limited power.

Allah possesses unlimited power.

The names may be familiar, but the realities are entirely different.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni position on the divine attributes (*sifat*). This methodology asserts that the attributes are eternally real without being separate from or identical to the Divine Essence.

1. Pre-Eternal Attributes and the Maxim of Imam Abu Hanifah

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah lays down the absolute structural baseline for Sunni theology in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* with his foundational declaration: *"Allah has always existed with His names and attributes."* This formulation explicitly guards orthodoxy against the false notion that Allah acquired His attributes incrementally over time. The Imam systematically lists the essential attributes of the Essence (*sifat al-dhat*) and declares them to be pre-eternal (*azali*).

To ensure the reader grasps the absolute self-sufficiency of the Divine, Imam Abu Hanifah establishes an unyielding logical principle: Allah did not become the All-Knowing only after creating objects of knowledge, nor did He become the All-Powerful only after creating entities subject to His power. His perfection is complete, absolute, and entirely independent of the cosmos. To suggest otherwise implies that the Creator transitioned from a state of non-action to action, or from potentiality to reality—concepts that introduce temporal change (*taghayyur*) into the Divine Essence and are thus textually and rationally untenable.

2. The Architecture of the Eight Attributes (*Al-Sifat al-Thubutiyyah*)

As explored extensively in *Imam Maturidi: Architect of Islamic Creed*, the school codifies the boundless descriptions of revelation into **eight distinct, pre-eternal attributes of the Essence**. These eight pillars form the core of how the believer conceptualises the perfection of Allah, substantiated by definitive scriptural proofs:

- **Life (*al-Hayat*):** The foundational attribute that serves as the prerequisite for all other attributes. Allah is Ever-Living, meaning His existence is absolute, self-sustaining, and entirely independent of physical organs, breathing, or vital cycles. This is anchored in the text:
  "And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die..."
  — (Surah al-Furqan, 25:58)

- **Knowledge (*al-ʿIlm*):** Allah's pre-eternal, infinite awareness. His knowledge encompasses all realities—the past, the present, the future, the hidden, and what is entirely impossible—without being subject to acquisition, forgetting, or renewal. This is established by the text:

  "...He knows what is within the heavens and what is on the earth. And Allah is Knowing of all things."
  — **(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:282)**

- **Power (*al-Qudrah*):** The attribute of absolute execution through which Allah acts, brings things into existence out of nothingness, and reduces things back to non-existence according to His divine design. This is affirmed by the text:

- "To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them, and He is over all things competent."
  — **(Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:120)**

- **Will (*al-Iradah*):** The attribute of specification (*takhsis*). It is through His Will that Allah chooses to bring a contingent reality into existence with specific characteristics, at a specific time, and in a specific manner rather than another. This is proven by the text:

  "His command when He intends a thing is only that He says to it, 'Be,' and it is."
  — **(Surah Ya-Sin, 36:82)**

- **Hearing (*al-Samʿ*) & Seeing (*al-Basar*):** Attributes of perfect perception. Allah hears all sounds and sees all realities—regardless of how loud, soft, manifest, or hidden—without requiring physical eyes, ears, light waves, or sensory faculties. This is declared by the text:

"...There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing."
— **(Surah ash-Shura, 42:11)**

- **Speech (*al-Kalam*):** An eternal attribute of the Divine Essence. Allah speaks without letters, sounds, voice, or language. The text of the Qur'an we recite is the temporal expression of this uncreated, pre-eternal divine attribute. This is verified by the text:

  "...And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech."
  — **(Surah an-Nisa, 4:164)**

- **Bringing into Being (*al-Takwin*):** The unique hallmark of the Hanafi-Maturidi school. Unlike other schools that view creating as a temporal action, Imam al-Maturidi proves that *Takwin* is a pre-eternal attribute of action (*sifat al-fi'l*). Allah possesses the eternal attribute of causing things to emerge, and the creation appears exactly at its designated temporal moment. This is supported by the text:

  "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs."
  — **(Surah az-Zumar, 39:62)**

3. Why Exactly Eight Attributes? The Principle of Encapsulation

A common accusation levelled by modern literalist factions against the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition is the false claim that the school reduces, restricts, or outright rejects the vast majority of Allah's scriptural descriptions by limiting its primary focus to only eight attributes. To the untrained mind or the hyper-literalist critic, this systemic codification is mistakenly viewed as a form of rationalist minimisation.

In the rigorous framework of classical *Usul*, this view is considered an absolute academic failure. It fundamentally misunderstands the difference between infinite divine realities and the pedagogical tools required to structure human comprehension. It is an unshakeable axiom of Sunni orthodoxy that the perfections, beauties, and majesties of Allah Most High are absolutely infinite and entirely boundless. He possesses infinite names and attributes that human intellect can never fully measure or encompass.

The systematic codification of these eight specific attributes by the classical masters is never a rejection or a limitation; rather, it is a highly sophisticated, protective method of epistemological encapsulation. These eight function as macro-parent categories or foundational existential pillars that structurally encompass and ground every single affirmative description, active name, and narrative found throughout the textual transmission (*naql*) of revelation.

The Blueprint of Affirmative Perfections (*Ṣifāt al-Thubūtiyyah*)

To fully comprehend how this encapsulation operates as an unassailable shield for the believer, one must analyze the internal taxonomy of how the school handles divine descriptions. The eight attributes form the core of the Affirmative or Positive Attributes (*Ṣifāt al-Thubūtiyyah*). They are real, uncreated constants that subsist eternally within the Divine Essence, serving as the necessary structural engine for every active name found in the Qur'an.

When a modern literalist insists on reading the hundreds of Beautiful Names as entirely isolated, separate attributes without an underlying parent structure, they plunge the reader into endless semantic confusion and threaten the absolute simplicity of divine unity. The Hanafi-Maturidi tradition solves this by demonstrating that every active name of mercy, justice, sovereignty, or majesty is functionally an operation tracing back directly to the interplay of these eight foundational pillars.

For example, names of profound mercy like *Al-Raḥmān* (The Most Merciful) or *Al-Ghafūr* (The Forgiving), and names of absolute justice like *Al-Ḥakam* (The Judge) or *Al-ʿAdl* (The Just), do not require the formulation of separate, independent metaphysical attributes. They are perfectly encapsulated by, and manifest through, the seamless execution of His pre-eternal Knowledge (knowing perfectly who to forgive or judge), His sovereign Will (choosing to show mercy or enact justice at a specific moment), and His absolute Power or *Takwīn* (bringing that mercy or justice into physical, material reality out of non-existence).

Far from a rejection, this methodology honors every single letter of scriptural revelation by providing the common Muslim, the student, and the teacher with an airtight, systematic blueprint that structures the boundless descriptions of God without becoming lost in infinite, unregulated subdivisions.

The Role of Negation Attributes (*Ṣifāt al-Salbiyyah*)

Complementing this affirmative encapsulation is the vital theological mechanism of the Negative or Exclusory Attributes (*Ṣifāt al-Salbiyyah*). Literalist critics often display severe confusion regarding the use of negation in theology, claiming that when a Maturidi master states what Allah is not, they are stripping the Creator of His reality.
In classical metaphysics, a negative attribute does not imply a deficiency; rather, it is the highest form of active protection (*tanzīh*) that isolates the Divine Essence from the flaws of created matter. The *Ṣifāt al-Salbiyyah* include attributes such as:

- **Pre-eternity** (*al-Qidam*—He has no beginning)
- **Everlastingness** (*al-Baqā'*—He has no end)
- **Absolute Dissimilarity to Creation** (*al-Mukhālafatu lil-ḥawādith*—Nothing resembles Him)

- **Absolute Independence** (*al-Qiyāmu bi-nafsih*—He requires no place, space, or cause)
- **Absolute Oneness** (*al-Waḥdāniyyah*—He has no parts or partners)

These are descriptors of absolute perfection via the complete exclusion of imperfection. When the text of revelation states what Allah is not—such as the prophetic evidence that He does not sleep—it establishes an immutable boundary. The weight of these negative attributes completely locks in the meaning of the affirmative ones.

By stating that Allah possesses absolute Power (*Qudrah*) while simultaneously applying the negative attribute of absolute dissimilarity to creation, the school guarantees that the believer affirms His executive capability without ever falling into the trap of imagining a physical, muscular, or localized limb. Negation and affirmation operate as twin, locked shields: affirmation establishes the reality of His majestic qualities, while negation permanently purifies those qualities from the constraints, limitations, and physics of the material cosmos.

4. The Ultimate Defense Against Literalist Slander

Therefore, the charge that the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition rejects or minimises the attributes of Allah is completely dismantled by the very mechanics of its scholarship. Literalism collapses because it confuses the human lexical origin of language with the transcendent reality of the Divine Essence. Far from safeguarding scripture, the hyper-literal lens poses catastrophic dangers to the core of monotheism, which the eight parent attributes are uniquely engineered to prevent.

5. The Structural Dangers of the Hyper-Literal Lens

When a modern literalist demands that every localized, descriptive word in the Qur'an or Sunnah be accepted upon its primary, material, and lexical

default (*al-ẓāhir*), they unknowingly commit severe theological deviations. This rigid lens introduces three catastrophic dangers into a believer's mind:

- **The Fragmentation of the Divine into Physical Parts:** If expressions like a "hand" (*yad*), an "eye" (*ʿayn*), a "face" (*wajh*), or a "shin" (*sāq*) are read with rigid literalism, the Divine Essence is inevitably conceptualized as a composite entity made of distinct structural sections, boundaries, and material limbs (*jawārih*). In classical logic, anything composed of parts is inherently dependent on those parts to exist, and a dependent entity cannot be the uncaused Necessary Being (*Wājib al-Wujūd*).

- **Plunging into Irrational Textual Contradictions:** If every text is read literally, the scripture itself appears self-contradictory. For example, a rigid literal lens would force the reader to reconcile how Allah is literally positioned atop a material Throne (*istiwā'*), while simultaneously being physically present inside the mosque during prostration, physically with the believer wherever they travel (*wa-huwa maʿakum*), and closer to them than their own jugular vein. Literalism cannot resolve these spatial paradoxes without falling into absurd intellectual gymnastics.

- **Attributing Material Multiplicity (*Taʿaddud*) and the Fallacy of Infinite Parts:** By elevating hundreds of distinct semantic, localized descriptions into entirely separate, independent existential attributes without a parent structure, literalism inadvertently creates a vast web of co-eternal realities, mimicking the philosophical errors of multiplicity that Sunni orthodoxy spent centuries refuting.

6. The Taxonomy of Descriptions (*Awṣāf*) and the Concept of Infinity

To fully expose this literalist innovation, one must deconstruct the concept of infinity and understand the precise nature of how attributes operate as divine descriptions (*awṣāf*). In Hanafi-Maturidi metaphysics, an attribute is fundamentally a description (*waṣf*) that qualifies our conceptualization of the Divine perfection; it is not an independent, physical object sitting inside or

alongside the Divine Essence. Because Allah Most High is absolute and infinite, the descriptions of His majestic reality are naturally limitless and will never end. This concept of infinity manifests across two distinct dimensions:

- **The Boundless Progression of Negation (*al-Ṣifāt al-Salbiyyah*):** The negative or exclusory attributes of Allah are literally endless. Because the realm of created flaws, limitations, and material physics is infinite in its potential variations, the corresponding negations required to protect the divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) are also infinite. We state that Allah is not a composite body (*jism*), He is not an accident (*ʿaraḍ*), He is not localized in space, He is not bound by time, He is not a color, He is not a shape, He is not subject to gravity, He is not dependent on organs, and He is not subject to sleep or decay, ad infinitum. This infinite chain of "Allah is not this, and Allah is not that" does not mean Allah possesses an infinite pile of separate physical shields inside His Essence. Rather, the infinity exists purely at the level of human semantic description. Every single negative description is simply a localized expression of a single, unified reality: Allah's absolute, unyielding dissimilarity to creation (*al-mukhālafatu lil-ḥawādith*).

- **The Execution of Infinite Affirmation (*al-Ṣifāt al-Thubūtiyyah*):** Similarly, when scripture applies beautiful descriptions of action and majesty to Allah —such as calling Him the Healer (*al-Shāfī*), the Giver of Honor (*al-Muʿizz*), the Humiliator (*al-Mudhill*), or the Guide (*al-Hādī*)—these descriptions are functionally infinite because the material objects and events they act upon throughout cosmic history are limitless.

  The critical danger of the literal lens is that it is entirely incapable of handling the concept of infinity without turning God into a physical composite. Because the literalist lacks a parent structure, they are forced to treat every single localised scriptural word as a distinct, literal, and existential component of God's being. If they read that Allah has a "hand," a "finger," a "shin," or an "eye," each word is cataloged as an independent, actual entity. When confronted with the infinite names and negative descriptions of God,

the literalist methodology falls into an absurd mathematical trap: it effectively maps an infinite series of separate, localized parts onto the Creator.

7. The Epistemic Necessity of the Parent Framework

To eliminate these structural dangers and resolve the trap of infinite parts, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition deploys the eight parent attributes (*al-Ṣifāt al-Thubūtiyyah*) as a mandatory intellectual lens. This framework is not a philosophical restriction, but a profound epistemic necessity for three primary reasons:

- **Preserving Divine Immutability and Simplicity:** By mapping all active names and descriptive expressions back to the eight parent constants—Knowledge, Power, Will, Life, Hearing, Seeing, Speech, and *Takwīn*—the school anchors everything in real, uncreated perfections that exist without composition, shape, parts, or limbs. It proves that Allah acts, speaks, and perceives without requiring physical infrastructure.

- **Providing an Objectively Verifiable Hermeneutical Rule:** Instead of allowing the human imagination to invent mental imagery for words like *yad* (hand), the parent framework establishes a strict interpretive baseline. It shows that whenever scripture mentions a "hand" or "face" in relation to a divine action, it is functionally a manifestation of His absolute Power, His sovereign Will, or His eternal *Takwīn* acting upon creation, completely purifying the mind from spatial layout.

- **Systematising Revelation for the Believer:** It provides the common Muslim, the student, and the teacher with a cohesive, unified grid. It demonstrates that the boundless names of majesty and beauty are not competing or isolated entities, but the beautiful, harmonised operations of a single, infinitely perfect, indivisible God. An infinite number of negative descriptions does not create multiple parts; they all resolve back into His singular Independence and Transcendence. An infinite number of active,

beautiful names does not create multiple parts; they are simply the limitless, shifting operations of His pre-eternal Knowledge, Will, and *Takwīn* acting upon a changing universe.

8. The Final Deconstruction of Literalist Innovation

Ultimately, literalism fails because it treats the Arabic language as if it operates in a structural vacuum, stripping it of its native rules of eloquence, metaphor (*majāz*), and majestic idiom. By treating every localized description as a separate physical trait, literalism inadvertently maps human, composite anatomy onto the Creator of the cosmos.

The eight pillars of encapsulation, guarded by the parameters of negation (*ṣifāt al-salbiyyah*), prove that our tradition does not hide from or reject a single verse or narration. On the contrary, it is the only school that provides a complete, intellectually secure matrix where all of revelation is fully accounted for, deeply revered, and robustly protected from the pitfalls of anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*). It allows the contemporary believer to look upon the infinite names of Allah with profound devotion, secure in the knowledge that they are experiencing the cohesive, unified perfections of the One True God, entirely untouched and uncompromised by the shifting physics of creation.

9. The Methodological Divergence: Maturidi vs. Ash'ari Positions

While both the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools comprise the unified methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, they diverge on specific technical layout points regarding the attributes. Understanding this difference is a central theme within *Imam Maturidi: Architect of Islamic Creed*. The core divergence rests on the status of the Attributes of Action (*ṣifāt al-afʿāl*), such as creating (*al-Khalq*), sustaining (*al-Rizq*), and giving life (*al-Iḥyā'*):

- **The Ash'ari Position:** The Ash'aris maintain that the primary attributes of the Essence are seven (excluding *Takwīn*). They argue that Allah's attributes of

action are temporal (*ḥādith*). For them, Allah is called "The Creator" from pre-eternity because He will create, but the actual attribute of creating only begins when the object is created in time. They view these actions as direct extensions of His pre-eternal Power and Will, rather than independent eternal attributes.

- **The Maturidi Position:** Imam al-Maturidi and the Hanafi scholars strongly reject the notion that any attribute of Allah can be temporal or newly originated. They argue that if creating only begins in time, it implies that the Divine Essence transitioned from a state of non-action to a state of action, which introduces change (*taghayyur*) into the Creator. Therefore, the Maturidis assert that *Takwīn* is an independent, eighth, pre-eternal attribute of the Essence. Allah was eternally the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Giver of Life in reality from pre-eternity, and the temporal emergence of the universe is simply the effect (*makhlūq*) of that eternal, unchanging attribute.

10. The Definitive Formula: Neither He, Nor Other Than He

Facing intense philosophical and dialectical challenges from the Muʿtazilites —who aggressively argued that affirming real, distinct attributes compromised absolute divine unity (*tawḥīd*)—Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi formulated a brilliant epistemological defense. The Muʿtazilites posited a rigid, rationalist dilemma: they claimed that if the attributes are real and eternal, they must either be completely identical to the Divine Essence (rendering the names redundant, empty synonyms) or completely distinct from the Essence. If they were distinct, the Muʿtazilites argued, it would mean multiple eternal entities co-existed alongside Allah, which would directly collapse into polytheism (*taʿaddud al-qudamā'*—the multiplicity of eternals). To resolve this, they stripped the sacred text of its meaning by reducing the attributes to mere descriptions of the Essence itself, claiming Allah is knowing by His Essence, powerful by His Essence, and living by His Essence, without possessing independent attributes of Knowledge, Power, or Life.

Imam al-Maturidi shattered this false dichotomy by pioneering the definitive, unshakeable Sunni formula governing the ontological relationship between the Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt*) and these eternal Attributes (*al-Ṣifāt*): **They are neither He, nor are they other than He (*lā huwa wa-lā ghayruh*).**

This airtight conceptual blueprint completely disarmed the heretical movements of his era and preserved the immaculate middle path of orthodox theology through three core parameters:

- **The Refutation of Redundancy (*Lā Huwa*):** The first part of the formula, *lā huwa* (They are not He), establishes that the attributes are not conceptually or ontologically identical to the Divine Essence itself. If Knowledge were simply identical to the Essence, and Power were simply identical to the Essence, then "Knowledge" and "Power" would become completely interchangeable, meaningless semantic synonyms. Man's intellect clearly recognizes that the cognitive reality of knowing a matter is distinct from the executive capability of bringing it into existence. Therefore, by declaring that the attributes are not identical to the Essence, Imam al-Maturidi preserved the objective reality, distinction, and infinite perfections of the scriptural attributes exactly as they were transmitted via revelation.

- **The Prevention of Polytheism (*Lā Ghayruh*):** The second part of the formula, *lā ghayruh* (They are not other than He), provides the ultimate metaphysical guard against polytheism. In the precise linguistic taxonomy of Hanafi *Usul*, an entity is classified as an "other" (*ghayr*) only if it can conceptually or physically exist in separation from the primary entity, or if its existence can precede or succeed it. Imam al-Maturidi demonstrated that Allah's attributes can never be defined as separate, independent variables. They do not exist outside of Him, nor can they ever be detached from Him. Because they are completely inseparable, non-contingent, and co-eternal constants that subsist entirely within the single, unique Divine Essence, they do not constitute a multiplicity of gods. The attributes are not separate from Allah; they are how Allah has eternally described His own perfect reality.

- **The Safeguard of Absolute Monotheism:** Through this profound synthesis, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition completely bypassed the twin pitfalls of heretical speculation. It effectively neutralised the Muʿtazilite innovation of total deletion (*taʿṭīl*), which stripped the Creator of His real qualities, while simultaneously locking the door against any form of pluralistic corporealism. It equips the student of knowledge with a brilliant rule: when we speak of Allah's Knowledge or Power, we are speaking of real, uncreated perfections that are inextricably bound to His singular Essence. They are neither identical to Him as a blank synonym, nor separate from Him as an independent entity. They are the eternal, unchanging realities of the One True God, flawlessly maintaining the absolute monotheism demanded by the Qur'an.

11. Affirmation Without Modality (*Ithbāt bilā Kayf*)

Together, these two grand masters equip the believer with a unified interpretive rule that resolves modern theological confusion. The tradition enforces an absolute balance: we must completely affirm the attributes exactly as they appear in revelation (*ithbāt*), while simultaneously clear-mindedly negating any physical modality, composition, or resemblance to creation (*tanzīh*).
As codified in *Kitab al-Tawhid*, any linguistic overlap between the qualities of creation and the attributes of the Creator is purely nominal. A human has limited power, but it is a created, finite, and dependent accident. Allah has Power, but it is an uncreated, infinite, and absolute attribute. By maintaining this strict boundary, the common Muslim is protected from both the literal anthropomorphism that reduces Allah to a material entity and the excessive rationalism that strips the Qur'an of its majestic descriptions.

Conclusion

The divine attributes provide the believer with knowledge of Allah's perfection and majesty. The Qur'an and Sunnah affirm attributes such as Life,

Knowledge, Power, Hearing, and Seeing, while Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi explain that these attributes are eternal and befitting Allah alone. By affirming the attributes without likening Allah to creation, a believer follows the path of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the great scholars of Islamic theology.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 7: The Beautiful Names of Allah

Among the greatest ways of knowing Allah is through His Beautiful Names (*al-Asma' al-Husna*).

Throughout the Qur'an, Allah introduces Himself through names that reflect His perfection, majesty, mercy, wisdom, knowledge, and power. These names are not merely titles. Rather, they reveal attributes of perfection that help believers understand their relationship with their Creator.

The more a person learns about the names of Allah, the greater his faith, reverence, hope, and trust become. For this reason, the scholars regarded knowledge of the Divine Names as one of the noblest branches of Islamic learning.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

"To Allah belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them."
(Qur'an 7:180)

Allah also says:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

"He is Allah; there is no deity except Him. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names."
(Qur'an 20:8)

And Allah says:

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَـٰنَ ۖ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

"Say: Call upon Allah or call upon al-Rahman. Whichever you call upon, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names."
(Qur'an 17:110)

These verses teach that Allah's names are perfect and that believers should know them, reflect upon them, and call upon Allah through them.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**Indeed, Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. Whoever enumerates them shall enter Paradise.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Supplications (*Kitab al-Da'awat*), Hadith no. 6410; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Remembrance and Supplication (*Kitab al-Dhikr wa al-Du'a*), Hadith no. 2677.

The scholars explained that "enumerating" the names does not merely mean memorising them. Rather, it includes understanding their meanings, believing in them, and living according to what they teach.

Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a famous supplication:

> "**I ask You by every name belonging to You, which You have named Yourself with, revealed in Your Book, taught to any of Your creation, or kept with Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen.**"
>
> Narrated by Ahmad in *Musnad Ahmad* (Hadith no. 3712). Authenticated by Ibn Hibban, al-Hakim, and numerous later scholars.

This hadith indicates that Allah possesses names beyond those specifically known to mankind.

Discussion

The Divine Names teach believers who Allah is.

When a Muslim learns that Allah is **al-Rahman (The Most Merciful)**, he gains hope in Allah's mercy.

When he learns that Allah is **al-Ghafur (The Most Forgiving)**, he turns to Allah in repentance.

When he learns that Allah is **al-'Alim (The All-Knowing)**, he becomes conscious that nothing is hidden from Allah.

When he learns that Allah is **al-Qadir (The All-Powerful)**, he places his trust in Allah rather than in created things.

For this reason, knowledge of the Divine Names is not merely theoretical. It transforms the believer's relationship with Allah.

Some of the Beautiful Names of Allah

Al-Rahman (The Most Merciful)

Allah says:

الرَّحْمَـٰنُ

"The Most Merciful."
(Qur'an 55:1)

His mercy encompasses all creation.

Al-Rahim (The Especially Merciful)

Allah says:

وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

"And He is ever Merciful to the believers."
(Qur'an 33:43)

Al-'Alim (The All-Knowing)

Allah says:

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"And Allah is Knowing of all things."
(Qur'an 2:282)

Al-Qadir (The All-Powerful)

Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

"Indeed, Allah has power over all things."
(Qur'an 2:20)

Al-Hakim (The All-Wise)

Allah says:

وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

"And He is the Mighty, the Wise."
(Qur'an 59:24)

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The methodology established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni framework for understanding the Beautiful Names (*al-Asma' al-Husna*). This tradition approaches the Divine Names not as arbitrary semantic titles, but as windows into the uncreated, pre-eternal perfections of the Divine Essence.

1. The Pre-Eternal Reality of Naming in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the unyielding foundational maxim of the school by declaring: *"Allah has always existed with His names and attributes."* This formulation explicitly targets the core error of heterodox groups who

asserted that Allah's names were newly originated (*makhluq*) or created in time after the universe came into existence.

Imam Abu Hanifah argues that if Allah only obtained the name *Al-Khaliq* (The Creator) after the universe was created, or *Al-Razzaq* (The Sustainer) only after physical sustenance was distributed, it would mean that Allah changed from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality. In Hanafi metaphysics, such an alteration implies a prior deficiency in the Divine Essence. Therefore, the Imam establishes that Allah was eternally *Al-ʿAlim* before creating anything to be known, eternally *Al-Qadir* before creating anything subject to power, and eternally *Al-Rahman* before creating any object of mercy. The Names reflect eternal, absolute realities, completely independent of the temporal timeline of creation.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Linguistic Ontological Defense

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this principle in *Kitab al-Tawhid* into a sophisticated critique of both literal anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*) and those who stripped the texts of meaning (*muʿattilah*). He addresses a critical epistemological paradox: if Allah is completely unique and beyond human comprehension (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*), how can human words—which are invented to describe finite, created objects—be applied to the Transcendent Creator?

Imam al-Maturidi solves this by proving that when we designate a name to Allah, the linguistic overlap with creation is purely nominal (*fi al-tashmiyah*), while the ultimate reality (*fi al-haqiqah*) is entirely different. When a human is named "merciful," that mercy stems from a soft physical emotion, a psychological reaction to witnessing suffering, or a desire to alleviate personal distress. Conversely, when we affirm that Allah is *Al-Rahim*, His Mercy is an uncreated, pre-eternal attribute of perfection that signifies the deliberate will to bestow favor and protect creation, entirely free from physical emotion, weakness, or temporal change.

3. The Relationship Between Names and Attributes (*Al-Ism wal-Musamma*)

A monumental contribution of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition is its definitive stance on the classical theological debate concerning the Name and the Named (*al-ism wal-musamma*). Factions like the Mu'tazilites argued that the Names were mere empty, metaphorical labels created by humans, asserting that Allah possesses no real, eternal attributes.

Imam al-Maturidi systematically refutes this in *Kitab al-Tawhid*, proving that the Name is functionally identical to the Named Entity when it refers to the Divine Essence Himself. When a believer says "Allah," "Al-Wahid," or "Al-Awwal," the word directly identifies the unique Divine Reality. Furthermore, when a name refers to an attribute, it proves the actual existence of that attribute. To call Allah *Al-ʿAlim* means He possesses the real, eternal attribute of Knowledge (*ʿIlm*). The Names are not empty metaphors; they are linguistically tied to the real, active, and essential *sifat* of the Creator.

4. Finite Enumeration vs. Infinite Perfection

This systematic approach clarifies the apparent paradox within the Prophetic evidence. While the famous Hadith records that Allah has ninety-nine names, the supplication of Ibn Mas'ud proves that Allah possesses names kept entirely within His unrevealed knowledge of the unseen.

Imam al-Maturidi synthesises this beautifully: the "ninety-nine" mentioned in the texts do not imply a mathematical limitation on Allah's infinite perfections. Rather, they represent a specific, mercifully revealed set of operational keys given to humanity. These ninety-nine names encapsulate all necessary aspects of Lordship (*Rububiyyah*), Divine Perfection, and accountability. By enumerating them—understanding their definitions, internalising their implications, and purifying the heart through their remembrance—the common Muslim, the student, and the teacher gain a

complete, structured path toward spiritual advancement and ultimate salvation in the Hereafter.

Conclusion

The Beautiful Names of Allah reveal His perfection, majesty, and mercy. Through them, believers come to know their Lord, strengthen their faith, and deepen their worship. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all emphasise the importance of understanding these names and reflecting upon their meanings. The more a person knows Allah through His names, the stronger his relationship with Him becomes.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 8: The Non-Fluctuation of Iman: Why the Essence of Faith is Constant While Taqwa Varies

Among the most important and historically contested discussions in Islamic theology is the question: What constitutes the true nature of faith (*iman*)? How is faith defined within the matrix of sacred revelation? What distinguishes the ontological reality of faith from the performance of righteous deeds? Can the essence of faith itself inherently increase and decrease, or does it remain a stable spiritual state? Furthermore, if believers differ vastly in piety, obedience, and spiritual station, does this mean they differ in the very essence of faith itself?

These critical questions occupied the intense attention of the earliest generations of Muslims and became the central subjects of systematic theological debate. In every generation, various heterodox sects reached extreme, opposing conclusions. The Khawarij declared Muslims who were guilty of major sins (*kaba'ir*) to be absolute disbelievers who had exited Islam. The Mu'tazilah proposed an intermediate position between belief and disbelief (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), while certain extreme groups of the Murji'ah minimised the importance of righteous deeds altogether, claiming that sin causes no harm to faith whatsoever.

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah rejected both extremes and established a beautifully balanced, middle-way understanding of faith that was later explained, defended, and structurally systematised by Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. Their precise position preserves both the immutable certainty of

faith and the absolute, binding necessity of righteous action without confusing the two. Before examining the formal technical statements of these two great Imams, however, we must anchor our investigation within the epistemological hierarchy of textual transmission (*naql*), beginning directly with the holy text of the Qur'an.

Qur'anic Evidence

The foundational status of faith and its distinct relationship to spiritual action is explicitly dictated by the text of divine revelation. Allah Most High says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwa."
(Qur'an 2:183)

This verse is extremely significant within Hanafi *Usul*. Notice how Allah begins the divine legal address by stating: *"O you who believe..."* He does not address disbelievers, nor does He state, "Fast so that you may become believers." Rather, He explicitly addresses people who already possess the complete essence of faith. The primary purpose of fasting is therefore not to create or increase the essential root of faith (*asl al-iman*), but to cultivate *taqwa*—greater God-consciousness, obedience, sincerity, and self-restraint. This distinction is structurally foundational: faith establishes the believer's covenant with Allah, whereas acts of worship strengthen that relationship and increase its visible fruits.

Likewise, Allah Most High says:

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ

"As for those who are rightly guided, He increases them in guidance and grants them their taqwa."
(Qur'an 47:17)

Again, the divine text does not state that Allah increases them in the essential definition or root of faith itself. Rather, He increases them in guidance (*huda*), certainty, *taqwa*, and spiritual excellence. Similarly, Allah commanded His Prophet ﷺ:

وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

"And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge."
(Qur'an 20:114)

Knowledge increases, guidance increases, *taqwa* increases, wisdom increases, patience (*sabr*) increases, and gratitude (*shukr*) increases. The Qur'an repeatedly speaks of believers growing spiritually without ever implying that the essential reality of faith itself is continually fluctuating or structurally unstable.

There are, however, verses that appear to suggest a literal change in faith. Allah says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

"The believers are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and when His verses are recited to them, they increase them in faith, and upon their Lord they place their trust."
(Qur'an 8:2)

Likewise, He says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَّعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ

"It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers so that they would increase in faith along with their faith."
(Qur'an 48:4)

To resolve any apparent contradiction, the Hanafi-Maturidi scholars explain that the "increase" mentioned in these verses refers explicitly to the perfection, strength, and manifestation of faith—greater clarity of certainty, stronger conviction, deeper tranquillity (*sakinah*), more complete submission, and firmer reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Allah—not to a quantitative change in the essential definition of *iman* itself. The believer's certainty grows, his understanding deepens, his *taqwa* increases, his worship becomes more sincere, and his heart becomes more attached to Allah. These are genuine increases, yet they represent the branches (*furuʿ*) and fruits of faith rather than alterations to its primary root (*asl*).

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of faith as a distinct entity from its perfection is also clearly shown in the living explanation of the Prophetic Sunnah. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ likewise distinguished between the existence of faith and its complete spiritual manifestation. He said:

"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 13; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 45.

This *hadith* does not negate the person's status as a Muslim altogether. Rather, it indicates the absence of complete, perfected, and mature faith (*kamal al-iman*). Likewise, the Prophet ﷺ stated:

"The adulterer does not commit adultery while he is a believer, and the thief does not steal while he is a believer."

(Narrated by al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oppressions (Kitab al-Mazalim), Hadith no. 2442, and Book of Laws (Kitab al-Hudud), Hadith no. 6772; and Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith (Kitab al-Iman), Hadith no. 57).

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah explained that this does not mean the sinner leaves the fold of Islam or becomes a disbeliever. Instead, it demonstrates that the perfection, light, and protection of faith are temporarily absent at the exact moment of committing a grave sin. Thus, the Sunnah, like the Qur'an, establishes a strict structural distinction between the essence of faith and its spiritual perfection.

Discussion

Human beings often confuse structural foundations with the traits that beautify them because they observe variation in everyday human behavior. When we encounter a building, we recognise its core foundation; adding decorations or extra rooms alters its size and beauty, but it does not change the fact that it is fundamentally a building.

Creation is characterised by variation, and believers undoubtedly vary in their outward practice. However, in the realm of core creed, faith is fundamentally a matter of absolute assent. A person either believes in the unseen realities revealed by Allah with complete certainty, or they do not. There is no intermediate percentage of certainty that suffices for salvation; 99% certainty mixed with 1% doubt is not faith, but doubt. Therefore, at the level of core conviction, *iman* is a singular, indivisible reality.

Islamic theology distinguishes between this binary foundation and the continuous spiritual growth that arises from it. Actions naturally flow from genuine faith, but they remain distinct from its essence. Believers

undoubtedly differ in knowledge, certainty, sincerity, reliance upon Allah, patience, gratitude, piety, righteousness, and excellence of character. These differences are real and observable, yet they represent differences in spiritual excellence (*kamal*) rather than differences in the essential, entry-level reality of faith itself.

The Symmetry of Faith: The Famous Formulation of Equality with the Sahabah

To ground this reality for the everyday believer, classical Hanafi-Maturidi theologians frequently address a statement that often shocks those unfamiliar with *Usul al-Din*: the assertion by an ordinary Muslim that "**I have the same *iman* as the Sahabah (the Companions).**" To the untrained ear, this claim sounds like an act of severe spiritual arrogance, equating one's personal piety with the greatest spiritual giants in human history. However, when unpacked through the sophisticated lens of classical jurisprudence, this statement is not an expression of self-righteousness, but a profound declaration of orthodox unity.

When a believer states that their faith matches the faith of the Sahabah, they are speaking strictly about the **object and essence of faith (*Musamma al-Iman*)**, not their individual spiritual station. They are affirming:

"I follow the exact same articles of faith as the Sahabah did. I believe in the same absolute Oneness of Allah, the same finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, the same angels, the same revealed books, and the same bodily resurrection."

In this cosmic taxonomy of belief, there is no hierarchy of truths; the unseen realities do not change based on who is observing them. The intellectual content of the creed accepted by the most illiterate bedouin or an ordinary Muslim living centuries later is identical to the creed accepted by Hazrat Abu Bakr al-Siddiq or Hazrat 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Crucially, this formulation explicitly clarifies that **one's level of *taqwa* is absolutely not the same as the Sahabah.** The text of revelation leaves no doubt that the psychological intensity of the Companions' certainty, their unparalleled sacrifices, their absolute detachment from the material world, and their night prayers represent a zenith of spiritual excellence that later generations cannot replicate.

By separating these two paradigms, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition establishes a beautiful, liberating axiom: ***iman* is entirely constant across the global community of believers, while *taqwa* varies enormously.** This prevents the fragmentation of the Muslim community into spiritual tiers of basic existence, ensuring that every Muslim who maintains absolute *tasdiq* in the core articles of faith remains securely anchored within the saving boundary of Islam, even as they spend a lifetime striving to close the immense practical gap between their personal *taqwa* and the majestic model of the Sahabah.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni position on the nature of faith. This methodology asserts that faith is an unyielding cognitive state of affirmation that cannot be broken by temporal disobedience.

- **The Technical Definition of Imam Abu Hanifah:** Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the absolute baseline for orthodox theology in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* by defining *iman* as the affirmation of the heart (*tasdiq*) together with confession by the tongue (*iqrar*). Righteous actions are indispensable, binding obligations of Islam, but they are not themselves the defining essence of faith. By separating actions from the core definition of *iman*, the Imam systematically dismantled the heretical innovations of the Khawarij, who declared that anyone who commits a major sin is a disbeliever bound for eternal Hellfire. Conversely, he rejected the extreme Murji'ite view by emphasising that deeds are strict obligations whose neglect constitutes

serious, punishable disobedience. The Muslim who commits a major sin remains a believer—although a sinful one (*fasiq*)—who is entirely accountable before Allah and in absolute need of sincere repentance.

- **Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemology of Tasdiq:** In *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this principle by providing a rigorous epistemological defense of *tasdiq* (heartfelt affirmation). He argues that faith originates in the cognitive recognition of truth, certainty, and absolute assent to revealed reality. If righteous deeds were an intrinsic part of the core definition of faith, then a person's faith would completely cease to exist the moment they neglect a single mandatory act or commit a single sin. This would plunge the believer into a constant, unstable cycle of entering and exiting Islam with every daily shortcoming. To preserve the psychological stability and spiritual security of the believer, Imam al-Maturidi proves that *tasdiq* is the fixed, permanent root anchor of the heart, while deeds are the beautiful, organic branches that grow from it.

- **The Metaphysics of Non-Fluctuation:** A foundational insight shared by both imams is that the essential root of faith does not inherently experience a quantitative increase or decrease (*la yazidu wa la yankus*). Because faith is defined by absolute certainty, it cannot expand or contract in its primary definition. If faith were to decrease quantitatively, it would mean that a portion of certainty has vanished, leaving behind a corresponding percentage of doubt. Since doubt is the absolute antithesis of faith, any literal reduction in the essence of faith would destroy it entirely. Therefore, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition establishes that while the *fruits* of faith—such as light, sweetness, ease of practice, and *taqwa*—fluctuate constantly based on a person’s obedience, the *essence* of faith remains constant as long as absolute *tasdiq* remains in the heart.

  The theological discussion of faith is not merely an abstract academic exercise; it carries profound practical implications for spiritual survival. First,

it teaches the believer never to despair because of their shortcomings or sins, completely guarding them against the destructive mindset that a single act of disobedience expels them from the mercy of Islam.

Second, it simultaneously teaches the believer never to become complacent or lazy, imagining that mere verbal profession removes the rigorous obligation of righteous action. The believer is empowered to continually strive to increase their *taqwa*, knowledge, certainty, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), and excellence of character. Faith establishes the eternal covenant between the servant and his Lord, while *taqwa* perfects that covenant throughout one's earthly life.

Conclusion

The belief that faith possesses a fixed essence complemented by a lifetime of spiritual growth forms the foundation of a sound understanding of Islamic theology. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all affirm that *iman* is an unshakeable anchor of the heart that remains distinct from outward physical actions. By recognising this profound distinction, the believer successfully navigates between the dangers of spiritual despair and moral complacency, anchoring their soul in monotheistic certainty while constantly striving to manifest the beautiful fruits of *taqwa* and righteous deeds.

PART I

BELIEF IN ALLAH (الإيمان بالله)

Chapter 9: Faith Is Established in the Heart, While Actions Perfect It

The precise relationship between faith (*iman*) and righteous deeds (*amal*) stands as one of the defining theological discussions throughout Islamic history. At the core of this investigation lies a simple but profound ontological question: Where does faith truly reside? Is a person classified as a believer primarily because of what he physically performs, or because of what he internally believes? The answer to this query determines how we understand the entire architecture of Islam. It directly impacts our understanding of salvation, the theological consequences of major sins (*kaba'ir*), the nature of repentance (*tawbah*), and the critical legal boundaries governing whether a Muslim remains within the fold of the community.

Throughout history, various heterodox sects answered this question in radically different ways. Some made external actions an inseparable, structural part of faith itself, declaring Muslims guilty of major sins to be absolute disbelievers. Others reduced faith to a mere superficial verbal profession while completely neglecting the vital importance of righteous deeds.

The Hanafi-Maturidi tradition firmly rejects both extremes. It teaches that faith is fundamentally established in the heart through sincere belief and affirmation (*tasdiq*) of divine truth, while righteous deeds are the natural fruits, obligations, and necessary manifestations of that faith. Actions perfect faith, strengthen faith, and beautify faith, but they do not constitute its primary defining essence. This balanced understanding successfully

preserves both the cognitive certainty of faith and the absolute necessity of righteous action.

The Two Extremes

To appreciate the stability of the middle path, one must understand the two opposing theological errors that emerged during the early formative period of Islamic theology:

- **The Extremism of the Khawarij:** This faction regarded actions as an intrinsic component of the very essence of faith itself. Consequently, they established a rigid legal paradigm where the commission of a single major sin automatically nullified a person's *iman*, expelling them from Islam and condemning them to eternal damnation.

- **The Complacency of the Extreme Murji'ah:** In direct opposition to the Khawarij, certain groups among the Murji'ah separated faith from actions so completely that righteous deeds became virtually irrelevant to one's religious standing, falsely claiming that sin causes no more harm to a believer than obedience benefits a disbeliever.

Neither position represents the authentic methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. The Hanafi-Maturidi tradition occupies the balanced middle path, demonstrating that while faith is established through heart-centered belief, actions remain binding, obligatory consequences of that belief. Neither paradigm should ever be confused with or substituted for the other.

Qur'anic Evidence

The textual transmission (*naql*) of divine revelation consistently and explicitly locates the repository of faith within the human heart. Allah Most High says:

وَلَـٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

"But Allah has endeared faith to you and made it beautiful in your hearts." (Qur'an 49:7)

Notice carefully the precise divine anatomy outlined in this text: Allah places faith explicitly within the heart (*qulub*), rather than the physical limbs or external instruments of action. Likewise, Allah says:

أُولَـٰئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ

"Those are the ones in whose hearts He has inscribed faith." (Qur'an 58:22)

Furthermore, Allah reveals the ultimate metric of judgment regarding those who are subjected to extreme physical coercion, stating:

إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ

"Except one who is compelled while his heart remains secure in faith." (Qur'an 16:106)

Despite outward words of disbelief uttered under duress, Allah vindicated the believer based entirely upon what remained firmly established within his heart. These verses establish a fundamental principle: faith is fundamentally a reality of the heart.

Prophetic Evidence

The living explanation of the Sunnah strongly reinforces this Qur'an-centric principle. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ repeatedly connected ultimate salvation to sincere belief in Allah and the testimony of *tawhid*, while simultaneously commanding believers to perfect that faith through righteous deeds.

Among the clearest narrations is the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

"Whoever dies knowing that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah shall enter Paradise."

Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 26.

He ﷺ also said:

"Whoever says: 'There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah,' sincerely seeking thereby the Face of Allah, Allah will forbid him from the Fire."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Prayer (*Kitab al-Salat*), Hadith no. 425; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Mosques (*Kitab al-Masajid*), Hadith no. 33.

In another authentic narration, the Prophet ﷺ said to Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه:

"There is no servant who bears witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah sincerely from his heart except that Allah forbids him from the Fire."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Knowledge (*Kitab al-ʿIlm*), Hadith no. 128; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 32.

Likewise, 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Whoever testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone without partner, that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, that Jesus is the servant of Allah, His Messenger, His Word cast to Mary and a spirit from Him, and that Paradise and Hell are true, Allah will admit him to Paradise according to his deeds."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Stories of the Prophets (*Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya'*), Hadith no. 3435; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 28.

These narrations establish one of the most fundamental principles of Islamic creed. The basis upon which a person enters Islam, and upon which they ultimately attain salvation, is sincere belief. The Prophet ﷺ repeatedly attached the promise of Paradise to genuine faith rooted within the heart. This does not diminish the importance of righteous deeds. Rather, it establishes the proper relationship between faith and actions: faith comes first, and actions follow. Faith gives life to actions, while actions perfect and beautify faith.

Had outward actions alone defined the raw reality of *iman*, these narrations would have been textually impossible. The Prophet ﷺ could not have attached the promise of Paradise to a sincere testimony of faith while leaving the detailed obligations of Islam to be learnt and practiced thereafter.

The Soteriology of Grace: The 500-Year Worshipper and the True Weight of Action

To firmly cement the proper relationship between faith and action, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition heavily emphasises the authentic prophetic maxim regarding ultimate salvation: that entry into Paradise is a manifestation of Allah Most High's divine **Grace and Mercy (*Faḍl*)**, rather than a transactional commercial payment for physical human actions (*ʿamal*).

The premier prophetic text outlining this structural asymmetry is the famous narration where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explicitly cautioned his circle:

"No one among you will be saved by his deeds alone." The Companions asked, "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He ﷺ replied, "Not even I, unless Allah wraps me in His mercy and grace."

(Narrated by al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Medicine, Hadith no. 5673; and Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Description of Judgment Day, Hadith no. 2816).

To unpack the deeper metaphysical layer of this reality for the reader, classical theologians frequently reference the famous historical narration concerning a devout worshipper from a previous nation. This man was granted an isolated mountain island by Allah, featuring a freshwater spring and a pomegranate tree that miraculously bore fruit daily. For exactly five hundred years, he lived in absolute isolation, completely separated from the distractions of worldly society, dedicating every waking second to intense, flawless physical prostration and worship. Upon his death, he stood before the divine court, and Allah Most High commanded:

"Admit My servant to Paradise out of My Mercy."

The man, viewing his five centuries of flawless outward physical performance as a definitive legal currency, respectfully objected, stating: *"Rather, my Lord, admit me to Paradise based on my deeds."*
To demonstrate the baseline reality of human debt, Allah Most High commanded the angels to weigh his five hundred years of continuous physical worship on one side of a cosmic scale, and to place just a single divine favor—the faculty of his **eyesight**—on the other. When the scale settled, the immense value of a single eye completely outweighed his five centuries of physical worship, leaving him in a massive deficit before he could even account for the blessings of his hearing, skin, blood, intellect, or heartbeat. The man was then ordered to be led toward the Fire. Realising the profound limitation of his actions, he cried out in absolute submission, begging to be judged by mercy, whereby Allah restored him to Paradise.

(Narrated by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī in ***al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn***, Book of Repentance and Asceticism (***Kitāb al-Tawbah wa al-Zuhd***), Hadith no. 7637. This tradition was also transmitted by Imām al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-Īmān* (Hadith no. 4153) and famously utilised as a foundational pedagogical text by classical Hanafi-Maturidi theologians to illustrate the profound asymmetry between human action and divine grace.)

The Theological Framework of Cause and Condition

This narrative provides an invaluable intellectual shield against modern literalness who attempt to misinterpret the school's stance. Far from reducing the importance of worship, this soteriological proof demonstrates why outward physical actions can never serve as the *defining essence* of faith. If actions were the literal mechanism that creates salvation, the 500-year worshipper would have possessed an unassailable legal claim.

The Hanafi-Maturidi masters explain that human deeds are inherently finite, flawed, and completely dependent on external infrastructure provided by the Creator Himself. A believer cannot breathe, lift their hands in prayer, or stay awake to fast without utilising the pre-existing faculties, time, space, and oxygen brought into existence by Allah out of nothingness. Therefore, to claim that our finite actions earn an eternity of infinite reward in Paradise as a matter of transactional equity is a rational and textual absurdity.

True faith (*iman*) establishes the eternal covenant of submission within the heart, allowing the believer to recognise their baseline dependency. Righteous actions are the mandatory, non-negotiable scriptural *conditions* of that covenant. We perform them out of absolute obedience, gratitude, and devotion, but we place our trust entirely in the uncaused Grace of the Creator. This balanced framework completely neutralizes both the extremism of the Khawarij—who imagined human actions could match the weight of divine judgment—and the moral laziness of the extreme Murji'ah, anchoring the soul in a profound state of absolute humility, active worship, and deep monotheistic certainty.

Discussion

Human beings often confuse structural foundations with the traits that beautify them because they observe variation in everyday human behavior. When we encounter a building, we recognize its core foundation; adding decorations or extra rooms alters its size and beauty, but it does not change the fact that it is fundamentally a building.

Creation is characterised by variation, and believers undoubtedly vary in their outward practice. However, in the realm of core creed, faith is fundamentally a matter of absolute assent. A person either believes in the unseen realities revealed by Allah with complete certainty, or they do not. There is no intermediate percentage of certainty that suffices for salvation; 99% certainty mixed with 1% doubt is not faith, but doubt. Therefore, at the level of core conviction, *iman* is a singular, indivisible reality.

Islamic theology distinguishes between this binary foundation and the continuous spiritual growth that arises from it. Actions naturally flow from genuine faith, but they remain distinct from its essence. Believers undoubtedly differ in knowledge, certainty, sincerity, reliance upon Allah, patience, gratitude, piety, righteousness, and excellence of character. These differences are real and observable, yet they represent differences in spiritual excellence (*kamal*) rather than differences in the essential, entry-level reality of faith itself.

To understand why actions are structurally distinct from the essence of faith, we can analyse this paradigm across two parallel timelines: the modern experience of entry into Islam, and the foundational historical timeline of the divine revelation itself.

The Modern Timeline of Entry into Islam

Imagine a simple illustration of a sincere convert embracing Islam today. He sincerely believes that Allah is One and that Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah, and he pronounces the two testimonies of faith (*shahadatayn*). At that very moment, every Muslim scholar across the global community unanimously agrees that he has entered Islam and is securely within the saving fold of the *Ummah*.

At that exact split second, he has not yet learnt how to pray. He has never fasted a single day of Ramadan. He has not paid *zakah*, nor has he performed *Hajj*. Has he entered Islam? Every Muslim answers in the affirmative. Now imagine one week passes. He is still learning Surah al-Fatihah, struggling to master and memorize the structural movements of the prayer. Has he suddenly become a disbeliever or exited Islam because he has not yet perfected these physical acts? Again, every Muslim answers with an unyielding no.

What changed him from a state of disbelief to faith was entirely his internal, sincere belief, his heart-centered affirmation of *tawhid*, and his internal acceptance of the Messenger ﷺ. Only afterwards does he begin learning the detailed physical obligations that naturally flow from that faith. This simple, undeniable reality illustrates the distinction carefully maintained by Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi: faith establishes a person's relationship with Allah, while obedience perfects that relationship. One is the foundation; the other is its fruit.

The Historical Witness of Revelation: Makkan Foundations and Madani Legislation

To completely solidify this theological boundary, we must look backward at the macro-historical architecture of the revelation itself. The divine transmission (*naql*) descended progressively over twenty-three years, split

strictly between the **Makkan period** and the **Madani period**. For the first thirteen years of the Prophetic mission in Makkah, the revealed verses focused almost exclusively upon anchoring the human heart in the primary roots of faith (*usul*)—the absolute oneness of Allah (*tawhid*), the reality of prophethood, the truth of revelation, and the certainty of the Hereafter.

During this extensive Makkan period, the vast majority of the detailed legal rulings and physical obligations (*furuʿ*) did not yet exist. The structural obligation of the five daily prayers (*salah*) was only legislated much later in the mission, descending as a divine gift during the night journey and ascension (*al-Isrāʾ wa al-Miʿrāj*). Similarly, the mandatory obligations of fasting Ramadan, paying *zakah*, and performing *Hajj* were not enacted until years later during the Madani period.

This historical timeline creates an unassailable theological proof for the Hanafi-Maturidi school. Prior to the legislation of *salah* after the *Miʾraj*, and prior to the progressive descent of the Madani laws, the early Companions (*Sahabah*) were already fully, completely, and validly recognized as believers (*muʾminin*) by Allah Most High. They possessed saving faith, were promised Paradise, and many achieved martyrdom, despite the fact that they had never performed a single five-daily prayer or fasted Ramadan.

Had outward, physical actions been an inseparable, structural component of the core definition of *iman*, the faith of the early Sahabah would have been invalid or deficient for the first decade of Islam—a position that orthodox Sunni creed rejects as an absolute heretical impossibility. The historical gradualism of revelation proves that the root of faith is a singular, internal assenting reality of the heart that exists completely independent of the chronological timeline of legal obligation. Faith was complete in Makkah; actions were later added in Madinah as binding duties to perfect, protect, and beautify that foundational covenant.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The insights found within *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* establish the precise linguistic and intellectual methodology required to maintain the status of the sinful believer while fiercely defending the necessity of sacred law.

- **The Technical Parameters of Imam Abu Hanifah:** Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah defines faith as affirmation of the heart together with confession of the tongue. Actions remain mandatory, and whoever abandons them commits serious, punishable sins. However, actions are not the defining reality of faith. This vital distinction enabled the Imam to reject both the Khawarij and the Murji'ah. The believer who commits major sins remains a believer, categorized as a sinful believer (*mu'min fasiq*). Righteous actions distinguish believers in rank and spiritual station (*darajat*) before Allah, but they do not determine whether the basic root of faith itself exists.

- **Imam al-Maturidi and the Organic Analogy of Kitab al-Tawhid:** Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi expands this principle by utilising a brilliant rational analogy. He explains that genuine faith produces obedience just as a healthy tree naturally produces fruit. The fruit is definitive evidence of the tree's health and life, but the fruit is not the tree itself, nor is it the source of the tree's root system. Likewise, righteous deeds demonstrate a living faith and serve to nourish and beautify it, yet they remain distinct from the primary reality of faith established within the heart.

- **The Theological Status of Major Sins:** One of the greatest practical consequences of this doctrine concerns the status of Muslims who succumb to major sins. The Hanafi-Maturidi masters highlight that the Qur'an repeatedly addresses sinful Muslims with the title of believers. Allah says regarding two groups of Muslims fighting one another: *"If two groups of the believers fight one another, then reconcile between them."* (Qur'an 49:9). Despite engaging in one of

the gravest sins—armed conflict—the divine text still describes both groups as *mu'minin* (believers). Furthermore, Allah establishes the absolute bounds of divine forgiveness by stating: *"Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but He forgives whatever is less than that for whom He wills."* (Qur'an 4:48). This verse proves that major sins remain beneath *shirk*. The sinner is entirely under Allah's sovereign will; He may choose to forgive them out of His infinite mercy, or He may punish them in accordance with His justice, but the mere commission of major sins does not automatically strip a Muslim of their identity as a believer.

The Grave Danger of Takfir

Building upon this framework, the master theologians of Ahl al-Sunnah exercised the most rigorous, protective caution before ever declaring a member of the *Qiblah* to be outside the fold of Islam. Unauthorized excommunication (*takfīr*) represents an existential threat to both the structural stability of human society and the spiritual safety of the individual believer. Because the primary root of faith (*asl al-īmān*) resides strictly within the hidden repository of the human heart, an outward observer cannot inspect, measure, or judge a believer's internal *taṣdīq* based on their sins, shortcomings, or administrative failures.

To override this default legal protection without an explicit, absolute confession of disbelief (*kufr*) is a severe transgression against sacred law. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ fiercely guarded this communal sanctuary by issuing terrifying warnings against the internal impulse to execute *takfīr*. He stated:

"If a man says to his brother, 'O disbeliever,' then it returns upon one of them. If it is as he said, [then it is well]; otherwise, it returns back upon the one who uttered it."
(Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, Hadith no. 6104; and Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Hadith no. 60).

Furthermore, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explicitly equated the spiritual weight of unauthorized excommunication to physical violence, declaring:

"**Cursing a believer is like killing him, and accusing a believer of disbelief is like killing him.**"

(Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, Hadith no. 6047).

In the precise jurisprudence of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, these texts establish a foundational legal maxim: we do not expel anyone from Islam unless they explicitly choose to exit through the same door they entered—the definitive denial of the very realities they affirmed. Unless an individual explicitly voices an absolute rejection of the core articles of faith or commits an act that definitively indicates an inner, total denial of revelation, they must remain completely protected, respected, and preserved within the legal sanctuary of the *Ummah*.

The Metaphysics of Arrogance (*Kibr*): The Archetypal Sin of Iblīs

When we peel back the academic layers of theology to inspect the psychological machinery behind the contemporary urge toward swift *takfīr*, we discover that it is rarely driven by a pure, objective love for scriptural truth. Rather, the rush to excommunicate other struggling Muslims is almost entirely born out of a severe spiritual disease: **arrogance (*kibr*)**.
In the spiritual taxonomy of the Naqshbandī path and the internal purification (*tasawwuf*) defended by our masters, *kibr* is defined as the fatal internal delusion that causes an individual to view themselves as inherently superior, more pious, or more structurally guaranteed of salvation than another servant of Allah.

The Satanic Origin of Spiritual Pride

This internal state of pride is not a standard human shortcoming; it is the absolute archetypal sin that launched the history of spiritual rebellion. When Allah Most High brought Hazrat Ādam (as) into physical existence out of clay and issued a sovereign command to the celestial assembly to bow, the entire angelic realm obeyed instantly. Iblīs, however, revolted. The Holy Qur'an records his internal dialogue and the precise logic of his downfall:

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۖ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ

"He [Iblīs] said: I am better than him. You created me from fire and You created him from clay."
(Qur'an 38:76).

This statement, *Anā khayrun minhu* ("I am better than him"), is the primary formula of satanic innovation. Iblīs did not deny the existence of Allah, nor did he deny His power or lordship. His apostasy (*kufr*) was born entirely out of an arrogant, self-righteous refusal to submit to a divine arrangement because he viewed the external material makeup of another entity with absolute contempt.

When a modern theological literalist or an overzealous extremist looks upon a sinful, struggling Muslim and confidently pronounces *takfīr* upon them, they are directly reproducing the exact psychological framework of Iblīs. They look at their own outward physical performance—their prayers, their long beards, their adherence to rigid rules—and contrast it with the shortcomings of another, concluding in their hearts: *"I am inherently better than him."* They usurp the divine right of judgment, blinded by the delusion of their own spiritual achievement.

The Absolute Exclusion from Paradise

To demonstrate the catastrophic cosmic weight of this internal disease, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ established an unyielding rule regarding entry into the eternal kingdom:

"No one will enter Paradise who possesses even an atom's weight of arrogance (*kibr*) in his heart." A man remarked, "But a person likes his clothes to look beautiful and his sandals to look beautiful." The Prophet ﷺ clarified, "Indeed, Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty. Arrogance is to reject the truth (*baṭar al-ḥaqq*) and to look down upon other people (*ghamṭ al-nās*)."
(Narrated by Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Hadith no. 91).

This text links the mechanics of *takfīr* directly to the definition of pride. Looking down upon other people (*ghamṭ al-nās*) and assuming that your localized understanding of scripture gives you the license to strip them of their Islam is the supreme manifestation of *kibr*.

Orthodox theology teaches that *kibr* is an attribute that belongs exclusively to the Creator; it is a cosmic dress that no created, contingent being has the right to wear. In a profound *Hadīth Qudsī*, Allah Most High explicitly warns humanity:

"Pride is My cloak and majesty is My lower garment. Whoever disputes with Me regarding either of them, I shall cast him into the Fire."
(Narrated by Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue and Manners, Hadith no. 2620).

The Illusion of Self-Righteousness: The Divine Prohibition of Self-Praise

While arrogance (*kibr*) manifests as looking down upon the creation, its internal engine is self-righteousness (*tazkiyat al-nafs*)—the deceptive delusion that one's own spiritual state is pure, validated, and secure before the Divine.

The self-righteous mind constantly evaluates the spiritual standing of others while assuming its own salvation is an absolute certainty. To dismantle this dangerous ego-illusion, Allah Most High issued a definitive, unyielding command in the Holy Qur'ān:

فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

"Therefore, do not claim purity for yourselves; He knows best who guards against evil."
(Sūrah al-Najm, 53:32)

In the classical exegesis (*tafsīr*) of Ahl al-Sunnah, this verse serves as a profound metaphysical warning. To "commend oneself" or declare one's own soul as definitively pure (*tazkiyah*) is to claim insight into the unseen (*al-ghayb*). Human beings can only observe outward actions; the true reality of piety (*taqwā*) is buried deep within the heart, known exclusively by the Creator. When a person falls into self-righteousness, they subconsciously assume the role of the ultimate judge, violating the very boundary of their servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*).

The Spiritual Perils of the Self-Righteous Ego

In the psychological purification (*tasawwuf*) taught by our masters, the dangers of self-righteousness are categorized into three catastrophic spiritual ruinous traits (*muhlikāt*):

- **The Destruction of Good Deeds (*'Ujb*):** Self-righteousness breeds vanity (*'ujb*), where a believer relies on their own worship rather than the mercy of Allah. This spiritual vanity instantly nullifies the sincerity of those actions.

- **The Blindness to Internal Flaws:** The moment a person convinces themselves of their own purity, they cease self-reckoning (*muḥāsabah*). They become hyper-fixated on the sins of the community while remaining utterly blind to the diseases of their own heart.

- **The Breeding Ground for Takfīr:** Self-righteousness is the psychological launchpad for unauthorized excommunication. The extremist only permits themselves to cast others out of Islam because they have already internally guaranteed their own flawless standing with Allah.

  True *taqwā* never proclaims itself. The righteous predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), despite their monumental worship, lived in a constant state of beautiful brokenness (*inkisār*) and holy fear, never daring to assume their deeds were accepted. By contrast, the contemporary literalist uses religious practice not as a mirror to fix their own flaws, but as a weapon to judge others. They forget that the only standard of purity that matters is the one determined by the Divine on the Day of Judgment—not the self-constructed verdicts of an arrogant ego.

Cultivating Humility within the Communal Sanctuary

Therefore, the Hanafi-Maturidi approach to faith and deeds operates as an irreplaceable spiritual cure for the heart. By separating the entry-level validity of *īmān* from the lifetime journey of *taqwā*, the school permanently subverts human arrogance. It forces the scholar, the student, and the teacher to look upon the most sinful Muslim not with the clinical hostility of *takfīr*, but with the profound, protective mercy of brotherhood.

It teaches the believer that while their outward actions may be highly disciplined, their acceptance is entirely dependent on an uncaused divine grace, rendering personal pride an intellectual absurdity. We remain internally anchored in absolute humility, looking upon our own actions with severe accountability, while looking upon the global community of believers with deep reverence—permanently extinguishing the satanic fire of *kibr* through the cool, serene waters of monotheistic mercy and love.

Conclusion

The belief that faith is fundamentally established within the heart provides the ultimate framework for community cohesion and theological precision. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all teach that while actions are the necessary, beautiful fruits of belief, they are not the defining essence of *iman*. By keeping the core of faith rooted in the heart's affirmation, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition successfully protects the Ummah from the devastating fires of *takfir* and extremist excommunication, ensuring that the door of mercy and repentance remains wide open for every struggling believer.

PART II

BELIEF IN THE ANGELS (الإيمان بالملائكة)

Chapter 10: Who Are the Angels?

Belief in the angels is the second pillar of faith mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ in the famous Hadith of Jibril. Although angels are hidden from human sight, their existence is affirmed repeatedly throughout the Qur'an and Sunnah.

A Muslim therefore believes in the angels not because he has seen them, but because Allah and His Messenger ﷺ have informed him of their existence.

The angels form part of the unseen world (*al-ghayb*), and belief in the unseen is among the distinguishing characteristics of faith.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All of them believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers."
(Qur'an 2:285)

Allah also says:

لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and they do whatever they are commanded."
(Qur'an 66:6)

And Allah says:

بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ ۝ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُم بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ

"Rather, they are honoured servants. They do not speak before Him, and they act only by His command."
(Qur'an 21:26-27)

These verses describe the angels as noble servants who worship Allah continuously and carry out His commands without hesitation.

Prophetic Evidence

'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and divine decree, its good and its apparent evil.**"
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 8.

This hadith establishes belief in the angels as one of the six pillars of faith.

'A'ishah رضي الله عنها narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from a smokeless flame of fire, and Adam was created from that which has been described to you."**
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Asceticism and Softening of Hearts (*Kitab al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa'iq*), Hadith no. 2996.

This hadith informs us about the origin of the angels and distinguishes them from other forms of creation.

Discussion

The angels are among the greatest creations of Allah.

Unlike human beings, they do not eat, drink, marry, or experience worldly desires. They do not rebel against Allah, nor do they neglect the duties entrusted to them.

Their lives are characterised by obedience, worship, and service.

The Qur'an describes them glorifying Allah day and night without becoming weary:

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ

"They glorify Him night and day and never tire."
(Qur'an 21:20)

Although human beings cannot normally see angels, Allah allowed certain prophets to see them. The Angel Jibril appeared to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in various forms, including his true form and in the form of a man.

Belief in the angels therefore reminds us that reality extends beyond what can be perceived by the physical senses.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni position on the nature of the angels and the epistemology of the unseen world (*al-ghayb*). This tradition approaches angelology not merely as a matter of narrative description, but as a critical test of sound intellect and textual compliance.

1. The Realities of Transmitted Truths in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the unyielding foundational parameter of the school by explicitly affirming that belief in the angels is an absolute requirement of sound creed. In *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, the Imam targets a core error of early rationalist and heretical factions who attempted to explain away the angels as mere symbolic representations of abstract concepts—such as describing them as forces of nature, human psychological inclinations toward good, or cosmic energies rather than actual existential beings.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically rejects this semantic dilution, proving that the angels are real, objective, living creations of Allah. He establishes that because their existence is conveyed through mass-transmitted, definitive texts (*nass qat'i*), denying their literal reality or reducing them to mere metaphors constitutes a direct rejection of the integrity of revelation. For the Hanafi school, the parameters of creed are dictated strictly by what Allah and His Messenger ﷺ have revealed, not by what human observation can visually verify.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemological Validity of the Unseen

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this principle in *Kitab al-Tawhid* into a sophisticated critique of materialist skepticism. He addresses a fundamental cognitive question: how can the human mind rationally accept the existence of an entire realm of beings that completely eludes the physical senses? Imam al-Maturidi solves this by returning to the core pillars of Sunni epistemology, which state that valid human knowledge is derived through three channels: the senses (*al-ayan*), true reports (*al-akhbar*), and reason (*al-aql*). He argues that while the senses are blind to the angels, the category of "True Reports"—specifically the infallible transmission of divine revelation via the Qur'an and the mass-transmitted traditions of the Prophet ﷺ—provides an absolute, legally binding path to certainty. Reason does not reject the unseen; rather, sound reason recognises that the universe is contingent and that its Creator has the absolute capacity to create physical and non-physical entities according to His infinite will. To demand sensory proof for everything is a flaw in reasoning that ignores the limits of human sensory faculties.

3. The Flawless Nature of Angelic Existence

A major theological insight shared by both imams—and heavily detailed within *Kitab al-Tawhid*—is the absolute distinction between the spiritual structure of the angels and the physical, test-bound nature of human beings and the jinn. In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, the angels are defined as being created without the internal conflict of worldly desire (*shahwah*) or anger (*ghaḍab*).

Imam al-Maturidi notes that because they lack these animalistic or earthly impulses, the concept of choice regarding obedience or rebellion does not apply to them in the same manner it applies to mankind. Their obedience is absolute, structural, and seamless, as stated in revelation: *"They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them."* This key insight guards the mind of the

student and the teacher from attributing any form of sin, fallibility, or internal rebellion to the angelic realm, thereby preserving the absolute integrity of the divine agents who carry out the governance of the cosmos.

The Epistemic Dialogue: Deciphering the Angelic Witness of Human Infirmity

To anchor this structural flawlessness within the primary textual transmission (*naql*) of revelation, classical Hanafi-Maturidi theologians reference the profound cosmic dialogue that occurred prior to the physical descent of mankind. When Allah Most High announced His sovereign intent to establish human agency upon the material earth, the angelic assembly responded with an inquiry rooted in absolute purity, as recorded in the Holy Qur'an:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ

"And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority (khalīfah).' They said: 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?'"
(Qur'an 2:30).

In the advanced theological exegesis of our school, this historical address must never be misinterpreted as an act of angelic arrogance, objection, or a challenge to the divine decree. Such an assumption represents a severe theological failure that violates the non-negotiable integrity of the angelic realm. Rather, the angels were speaking strictly from their own objective, non-conflictual metaphysical reality.

Being completely insulated from the heavy, terrestrial weight of the human *nafs*, the angels could not initially conceptualize how a creature bound by physical bodies, animal impulses, anger, and worldly desire could successfully navigate the cosmos without plunging into absolute moral

corruption (*fisq*) and chaos (*fasād*). Their contrast—*"while we declare Your praise and sanctify You"*—was an expression of their structural defaults. For an angel, worship is as natural and effortless as breathing is to a human; it is woven into their very substance.

By detailing this dialogue, the Qur'an highlights the immense, qualitative chasm between the flawless, static excellence of the angels and the dynamic, test-bound nature of humanity. The angels serve Allah through the absolute perfection of their created nature, completely free from the internal friction of temptation.

This provides the student of knowledge with a powerful protective shield: it proves that the angelic realm operates as an uncompromised, unyielding baseline of cosmic obedience, guaranteeing that every revelation they transmit and every decree they execute remains entirely unpolluted by the flaws, whims, or changing desires that characterize the earthly human experience.

4. Protecting the Channel of Revelation

Ultimately, the systematic focus on angelology in this tradition serves to protect the very foundation of prophethood and the sacred texts. Imam al-Maturidi demonstrates that because the angels—specifically Jibril—serve as the immaculate, infallible emissaries through whom the divine word reaches humanity, any doubt cast upon their literal existence or perfection directly undermines the validity of the revealed books.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on literal textual affirmation with Imam al-Maturidi's robust defense of true reports, this tradition provides a comprehensive framework. It transforms belief in the angels from a simple historical narrative into an intellectual shield, anchoring the

common Muslim, the student, and the teacher in an unshakeable certainty regarding the hidden realities of the cosmos.

Conclusion

The angels are noble servants of Allah created from light and entrusted with various responsibilities throughout creation. They worship Allah continuously, never disobey His commands, and form an integral part of the unseen world. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all affirm that belief in the angels is an essential pillar of Islamic faith and a necessary component of sound creed.

PART II

BELIEF IN THE ANGELS (الإيمان بالملائكة)

Chapter 11: The Duties of the Angels

In the previous chapter, we learned that angels are noble servants of Allah who were created from light and who never disobey His commands.

While all angels worship Allah and glorify Him continuously, Allah has entrusted many of them with specific responsibilities. Through these duties, they carry out His commands throughout creation.

Learning about these responsibilities increases a believer's awareness of Allah, strengthens belief in the unseen, and deepens appreciation for the wisdom with which Allah governs His creation.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and they do whatever they are commanded."
(Qur'an 66:6)

Allah also says:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ

"Those who carry the Throne and those around it glorify the praise of their Lord."
(Qur'an 40:7)

And Allah says:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ ۝ كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ ۝ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"Indeed, over you are guardians, noble scribes, who know what you do."
(Qur'an 82:10-12)

These verses demonstrate that Allah has assigned different duties to different groups of angels.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"The angels take turns among you by night and by day. They gather together at the Fajr prayer and the 'Asr prayer."**
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Times of Prayer (*Kitab Mawaqit al-Salah*), Hadith no. 555; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer (*Kitab al-Masajid*), Hadith no. 632.

Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"The heavens creak, and they have a right to creak. There is not the space of four fingers within them except that an angel is placing his forehead in prostration to Allah."**

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith no. 2312.
Classified as Hasan by numerous scholars.

These narrations demonstrate both the vast number of angels and their constant devotion to worship.

Some of the Major Angels

Jibril (Gabriel)

Jibril عليه السلام is the greatest of the angels and the angel entrusted with revelation.

Allah says:

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ۝ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ

"The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down upon your heart."
(Qur'an 26:193-194)

Through Jibril, Allah revealed the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and revelation to the prophets before him.

Mikail (Michael)

Mikail عليه السلام is associated with rain, provision, and sustenance by the command of Allah. His majestic status is explicitly cemented in the Qur'an alongside Jibril in Surah al-Baqarah (2:98), where Allah declares that whoever is an enemy to His angels, Jibril, and Mikail, then Allah is an enemy to such disbelievers. While the extensive details of his responsibilities are established primarily through authentic narrations, his elite position as one of the greatest archangels remains a definitive matter of scriptural text.

Israfil

Israfil عليه السلام is entrusted with blowing the Trumpet at the end of time.

Allah says:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ

"And the Trumpet shall be blown."
(Qur'an 39:68)

The identity of the angel responsible for this task is established through authentic hadith.

The Angel of Death

Allah says:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ

"Say: The Angel of Death who has been entrusted with you will take your souls."
(Qur'an 32:11)

When a person's appointed time arrives, the Angel of Death carries out Allah's command.

The Recording Angels

Allah says:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"Not a word does a person utter except that there is a watcher ready to record it."
(Qur'an 50:18)

These angels record the deeds of every human being.

Munkar and Nakir

The Prophet ﷺ informed us that immediately after burial is completed, the deceased will be questioned regarding his Lord, his religion, and his prophet. Al-Barāʾ ibn ʿĀzib (ra) narrated the definitive, mass-transmitted prophetic text outlining the precise mechanics of this questioning in the grave.

(Narrated by Abu Dawud in Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of the Sunnah [Kitab al-Sunnah], Hadith no. 4751/4752; and Ahmad in Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 4, p. 287. Classified as Sahih by classical verifiers).

Belief in the questioning of the grave, the arrival of the two angels, and the immediate reality of accountability forms an essential, non-negotiable article of faith within the creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*.

Discussion

The various duties assigned to the angels demonstrate the order and wisdom that characterise Allah's creation.

The angels do not act independently. They possess no share in divinity and exercise no authority apart from what Allah grants them. Rather, they are honoured servants who faithfully execute the commands of their Lord. For this reason, Islam rejects both the denial of the angels and the elevation of angels to divine status. They are neither imaginary beings nor objects of worship. They are servants of Allah whose existence and duties are known through revelation.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The operational framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the functional roles of the angels within the cosmic order. This tradition approaches angelic duties not as semi-divine tasks executed by independent agents, but as clear proofs of Allah's absolute sovereignty and meticulous cosmic governance.

1. The Literal Reality of Unseen Actions in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to explicitly affirm the objective, literal reality of the specific angelic duties mentioned in revelation. The Imam targets a core error of early philosophical and esoteric factions who attempted to strip these texts of their literal weight. These unorthodox trends frequently asserted that the recording angels (*Kiraman Katibin*) were merely metaphors for a human being's internal memory, or that the questioning by Munkar and Nakir was an allegorical representation of psychological anxiety within the mind of the dying.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically dismantles this speculative dilution. He explicitly states in his text that the writing of the scribes is an objective reality, and that the questioning in the grave (*su'al al-qabr*) by Munkar and Nakir is an absolute, undeniable truth. For the Hanafi school, because these duties are established via explicit textual indicators (*nass*), reinterpreting them as abstract psychological states represents a dangerous departure from the epistemological boundaries of orthodox Islam. The duties are real, the agents are real, and their execution occurs exactly as dictated by the Creator.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Secondary Causes (*Asbab*)

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi utilises the discussion of angelic duties in *Kitab al-Tawhid* to outline a profound metaphysical principle: the relationship between divine power and secondary causes (*al-asbab*). A critical philosophical question arises: if Allah is All-Powerful and perfectly capable of executing every event in the cosmos directly through His pre-eternal attribute of *Takwin*, why does He employ an army of angels to carry out revelation, rain, death, and recording?

Imam al-Maturidi solves this by proving that Allah's deployment of the angels is an expression of His supreme Wisdom (*Hikmah*) and structural order, not a sign of need or dependency. Allah does not require Jibril to communicate, nor does He require the Angel of Death to seize a soul. Rather, Allah has established a beautiful cosmic system operating through secondary causes to manifest His grand order to creation. The angels function as the immaculate, completely submissive instruments through which divine decrees materialise in the physical world. By maintaining this distinction, the Maturidi methodology ensures that the common Muslim respects the physical and unseen systems of the universe without ever confusing the instrument with the true, ultimate Cause, who is Allah alone.

3. The Specific Realities of the Grave and Eschatology

A major focus within *Kitab al-Tawhid*—and one that forms a crucial line of defense in classical Sunni theology—is the intellectual verification of the eschatological duties assigned to the angels, specifically the questioning by Munkar and Nakir and the blowing of the Trumpet by Israfil. Heterodox rationalists often rejected the punishment and questioning of the grave, arguing that because a buried body appears motionless to human observers, no such angelic interaction could be occurring.

Imam al-Maturidi counters this with a rigorous epistemological defense. He explains that human sensory perception (*al-iyan*) is a limited instrument designed strictly to navigate the immediate physical dimensions of this worldly life. The transition into the intermediate realm (*al-Barzakh*) introduces an entirely different set of existential laws. Reason dictates that the absolute truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ having been established, the mind must fully submit to his reports regarding these unseen events. The angelic interrogation is an existential reality experienced by the soul and connected to its earthly vessel in a manner that completely eludes the blunt instruments of human observation, rendering modern materialistic skepticism completely irrational.

4. The Pedagogical Guardrail for the Ummah

Ultimately, the systematic focus on the duties of the angels in the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition serves as a vital pedagogical guardrail for the student of knowledge and the teacher. It enforces a strict theological boundary: the angels possess absolute zero share in divinity (*Rububiyyah*). They do not possess independent free will, they do not accept partnerships, and they cannot alter a divine decree out of their own volition.

By detailing their massive responsibilities—such as the creaking of the heavens under the sheer weight of their constant prostrations—the tradition humbles the human ego. It demonstrates that the universe is teeming with sublime, flawlessly obedient servants. This transforms the study of angelology from a static list of names into a dynamic, living consciousness.

The common Muslim realises that every word uttered is being preserved by noble scribes, and every breath taken brings them closer to an appointed meeting with the Angel of Death, thereby perfectly anchoring internal spiritual refinement within a logically airtight theological framework.

Conclusion

Allah has entrusted different angels with different responsibilities, including revelation, sustenance, recording deeds, taking souls, and carrying out events associated with the Last Day. Although hidden from human sight, their existence and duties are firmly established by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Belief in these angels forms an essential part of Islamic creed and reminds believers of the vast and ordered reality that exists beyond the physical world.

PART III

BELIEF IN THE BOOKS (الإيمان بالكتب)

Chapter 12: Why Did Allah Reveal Books?

One of the six pillars of faith is belief in the books revealed by Allah.

Throughout history, Allah sent prophets and messengers to guide humanity. Alongside many of these prophets, He revealed scriptures containing guidance, wisdom, commandments, and teachings appropriate for their communities.

These revelations were not sent because Allah was unaware of human affairs, nor because mankind deserved them through their own efforts. Rather, revelation is among the greatest manifestations of Allah's mercy towards His creation.

Without revelation, human beings would remain uncertain regarding many of life's most important questions. While reason can recognise the existence of a Creator, it cannot independently determine every detail concerning worship, morality, salvation, and the Hereafter.

For this reason, Allah revealed books to guide mankind towards the truth.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ

"Mankind was one community, then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of glad tidings and warnings and revealed with them the Book in truth."
(Qur'an 2:213)

Allah also says:

رُّسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ

"Messengers as bearers of glad tidings and warnings, so that mankind would have no argument against Allah after the messengers."
(Qur'an 4:165)

And Allah says:

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرَاةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ

"Indeed, We revealed the Torah, containing guidance and light."
(Qur'an 5:44)

These verses establish that Allah revealed scriptures to guide humanity and clarify the truth.

Prophetic Evidence

'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and divine decree, its good and its apparent evil."**
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 8.

This famous Hadith of Jibril identifies belief in the revealed books as one of the six pillars of faith.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Prophets (*Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya'*), Hadith no. 3443; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2365.

This hadith teaches that although different prophets were sent with different laws, the foundation of their message remained the same: worship Allah alone.

Discussion

Human beings possess intellect, reason, and the ability to reflect. These are among Allah's greatest gifts.

However, reason has limits.

A person may conclude that a Creator exists, but reason alone cannot determine how that Creator wishes to be worshipped.

Reason alone cannot establish the details of prayer, fasting, charity, or pilgrimage.

Reason alone cannot provide certainty concerning Paradise, Hell, resurrection, or the unseen world.

For this reason, revelation is necessary.

The revealed books provide knowledge that lies beyond the reach of unaided human reasoning. Through revelation, mankind learns who Allah is, why they were created, and how they may attain success in this life and the next.

The revealed books therefore serve as a bridge between the Creator and His creation.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the existential necessity of divine revelation. This tradition approaches the revealed books not merely as ethical codes, but as critical epistemological correctives that perfect human intellect and clarify accountability.

1. The Fixed Universality of Revelation in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the unyielding foundational parameter of the school by establishing that belief in all books revealed by Allah is a non-negotiable pillar of sound creed. In *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, the Imam targets a core error of early sectarian groups who attempted to create false divisions between the messages of different scriptures.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically proves that while the secondary legal applications (*al-furu'*) varied across historical eras to suit specific nations, the underlying theological foundation (*al-usul*) was entirely unified across every book Allah ever sent down. For the Hanafi school, to accept one book while rejecting another, or to view the historical scriptures as fundamentally conflicting systems of belief, represents a complete failure to grasp the pre-

eternal nature of divine guidance. Every book revealed was an expression of the same unyielding truth: the absolute oneness of Allah (*tawhid*) and the necessity of sincere devotion.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Synthesis of Reason and Revelation

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* into a sophisticated deconstruction of pure rationalist philosophies—such as those of the Barahimah (fideists who argued that if reason is sufficient, revelation is superfluous, and if reason is deficient, revelation cannot be understood).

Imam al-Maturidi masterfully solves this by defining the exact structural boundaries of the human intellect (*al-ʾaql*). He argues that while reason is a valid, divinely bestowed primary instrument capable of independently concluding that the universe must possess a single, wise Creator, it is inherently limited by its material confinement. Reason can detect the *existence* of the Architect, but it cannot independently uncover the precise *pleasure* (*rida*) of that Architect. It cannot deduce the exact mechanisms of worship, the boundaries of ritual law, or the intricate realities of eschatology. Therefore, Imam al-Maturidi establishes that revelation does not oppose reason; rather, it functions as its ultimate light and perfecter. Revelation provides the explicit content (*al-bayan*) that the intellect recognises it desperately needs but cannot self-generate.

3. Wisdom (*Hikmah*) as an Eternal Attribute and Creative Principle

To fully appreciate why books were revealed, one must enter the absolute core of Maturidi metaphysics: the eternal attribute of **Wisdom (*al-Hikmah*)**. Unlike other theological traditions that view wisdom as a passive description of actions or a mere secondary consequence of divine power, Imam al-Maturidi elevates *Hikmah* to a foundational status. He proves that Allah is eternally Wise in His Essence, and that His attribute of *Takwin* (Bringing into Being) operates in complete, unbroken alignment with His absolute Wisdom.

In Maturidi theology, *Hikmah* is defined as putting everything in its proper, rightful place, and ensuring that every act leads to a purposeful, beneficial outcome. Imam al-Maturidi notes that the cosmos was not created in sport, vanity, or random variation (*ʿabath*). Because creation is built upon deliberate, purposeful design, human beings were created as distinct moral agents.

However, because the material world is shifting and human desires (*hawa*) are corruptible, the intellect requires a clear, unyielding anchor to discern the ultimate purpose of existence. Allah's eternal *Hikmah* therefore demands the sending of revealed books. The scriptures are not an arbitrary afterthought; they are the direct, necessary expression of divine wisdom, explicitly manifesting the cosmic purpose to mankind and safeguarding the mind from drifting into meaninglessness or existential confusion.

4. The Balance of Objective Morality and Divine Justice (*Adl*)

Closely tied to *Hikmah* is the monumental Maturidi concept of **Justice (*al-ʿAdl*)** and its relationship to moral values (*al-husn wal-qubh*—the beautiful and the ugly). This is a fierce battleground in classical Islamic thought, and understanding Imam al-Maturidi's unique resolution is essential for every advanced student and teacher.

- **The Mu'tazilite Error:** The Mu'tazilites went to an extreme rationalist extreme, arguing that human reason could completely and independently judge absolute good and evil in every scenario, to the point where they claimed Allah was *obligated* by reason to do what is best for creation.

- **The Ash'ari Position:** Fearing that assigning intrinsic, independent authority to human reason might compromise absolute divine sovereignty, the Ash'ari school emphasised that legal ruling (*al-hukm*) belongs exclusively to revelation. They maintained that while the mind can perceive immediate worldly benefit or harm, true moral accountability and the definitive status of

an action as rewardable or punishable are determined solely by the divine command (*al-amr al-ilahiyy*).

- **The Maturidi Resolution:** Imam al-Maturidi established the definitive, balanced Sunni position. He proved that things *do* possess intrinsic qualities of benefit or harm that the human mind can frequently recognise through rational reflection. However, human judgment is inherently clouded by immediate biases, temporary desires, and sensory limits.

  Therefore, divine *Adl* (Justice) mandates that human beings cannot be left to their own subjective, fractured standards of morality. If left entirely to ourselves, human factions would inevitably redefine justice to suit their own political or personal whims, corrupting the absolute definitions of right and wrong. The revelation of the books steps in as an immaculate, objective legal criterion. The scriptures codify and cement the absolute standards of justice, lifting morality above human subjectivity and establishing a universal, immutable standard of divine law (*Shari'ah*) that perfectly mirrors the transcendent justice of the Creator.

5. Establishing the Divine Ultimatum (*Iqamat al-Hujjah*)

Ultimately, this deep integration of *Hikmah* and *Adl* serves to clarify the absolute fairness of final accountability on the Day of Judgment. Imam al-Maturidi links this directly to the text of Surah an-Nisa (4:165), demonstrating that the revealed books establish the definitive divine ultimatum (*iqamat al-hujjah*) over mankind.

While a person is rationally accountable for recognising the existence of their Creator through the structural signs of the cosmos, they cannot be justly punished for missing the specific legal or ritual intricacies of religion until an explicit, revealed text has reached them. Divine justice dictates that the warning must precede the reckoning. By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's

insistence on the unity of the prophetic message with Imam al-Maturidi's massive metaphysical framework on wisdom and morality, this tradition elevates the study of the revealed scriptures. It transforms belief in the books from a simple historical acknowledgement into a profound realisation of divine mercy, providing the common Muslim, the student of knowledge, and the teacher with a logically flawless understanding of how the divine word guides human flourishing.

Conclusion

Allah revealed books to His prophets in order to guide humanity, clarify the truth, establish proof, and lead people towards salvation. The Qur'an repeatedly describes revelation as guidance and light, while Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi emphasise its necessity for human flourishing. Belief in the revealed books therefore forms an essential pillar of faith and a testament to Allah's mercy towards His creation.

PART III

BELIEF IN THE BOOKS (الإيمان بالكتب)

Chapter 13: The Previous Revealed Books

As Muslims, we believe that Allah did not send guidance exclusively to the followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Throughout history, Allah sent prophets and messengers to different nations, and with many of them He revealed scriptures containing guidance, wisdom, commandments, and reminders.

Belief in these revealed books is an essential component of Islamic faith.

A Muslim believes that these scriptures were originally revealed by Allah and constituted true guidance for the people to whom they were sent. At the same time, Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final revelation and the only revealed scripture preserved in its entirety.

This balanced position allows Muslims to affirm the previous revelations while recognising the unique status of the Qur'an.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ

"Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub and the Tribes, and what was

given to Musa and 'Isa, and what was given to the prophets from their Lord."
(Qur'an 2:136)

Allah also says:

وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا

"And We gave Dawud the Zabur."
(Qur'an 4:163)

And He says:

وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ

"And We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light."
(Qur'an 5:46)

These verses establish that Allah revealed scriptures to His prophets throughout history.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."**
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Prophets (*Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya'*), Hadith no. 3443; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2365.

The Prophet ﷺ also said:

> "**Do not prefer me over Musa.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Oppressions (*Kitab al-Mazalim*), Hadith no. 2412; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2373.

The scholars explained that these narrations teach respect for all the prophets and the revelations that Allah entrusted to them.

Discussion

The Qur'an mentions several revealed scriptures by name.

The Scrolls of Ibrahim (Suhuf Ibrahim)

Allah says:

إِنَّ هَـٰذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ ۝ صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ

"Indeed, this is in the former scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa." **(Qur'an 87:18-19)**

Although little detail has reached us concerning these scrolls, Muslims believe that they were genuine revelation from Allah.

The Torah (Tawrah)

The Tawrah was revealed to Prophet Musa عليه السلام and served as guidance for the Children of Israel.

Allah describes it as containing:

> "**guidance and light**" (Qur'an 5:44).

The Psalms (Zabur)

The Zabur was revealed to Prophet Dawud عليه السلام.

Unlike the Tawrah, it is generally understood to have consisted primarily of praises, supplications, wisdom, and glorification of Allah.

The Gospel (Injil)

The Injil was revealed to Prophet 'Isa عليه السلام.

The Qur'an describes it as containing:

> "**guidance and light**" (Qur'an 5:46).

Muslims believe that the original Gospel revealed to 'Isa was divine revelation from Allah.

The Muslim Position Regarding Previous Scriptures

Islam teaches neither wholesale rejection nor uncritical acceptance of the scriptures presently possessed by other religious communities.

Rather, Muslims believe:

1. Allah originally revealed scriptures to His prophets.
2. Those revelations were true and constituted genuine guidance.
3. The Qur'an confirms the truths that remain from previous revelations.

4. The Qur'an serves as the final criterion (*furqan*) by which earlier claims are judged.

For this reason, Muslims affirm the original revelations while recognising that the Qur'an occupies a unique position as the final and preserved revelation.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the historical timeline of divine revelation. This tradition approaches the previous scriptures through a precise lens that balances the absolute eternity of the divine attribute of Speech (*Kalam*) with the temporal, varied expressions sent to different nations.

1. The Unity of Divine Speech in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish a vital metaphysical baseline: the absolute unity and uncreated nature of divine revelation. The Imam targets a core error of early sectarian groups who fell into confusion when observing that different scriptures were revealed in different human languages—such as the Hebrew of the *Tawrah* or the Syriac of the *Injil*. Factions like the Mu'tazilites argued that because these texts possess linguistic, grammatical, and temporal variations, the scriptures must be newly created accidents (*makhluq*).

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically dismantles this fallacy by separating the eternal attribute from its worldly expressions. He establishes that **Allah's Speech (*Kalam*) is a single, uncreated, pre-eternal attribute subsisting in His Essence**. The structural shift between the *Tawrah*, the *Zabur*, the *Injil*, and the *Qur'an* does not imply a change, alteration, or succession within Allah Himself. Rather, these diverse scriptures represent temporal, localised expressions (*al-nazm al-dall*) of a singular, unchanging Divine Word. By

asserting that a Muslim must affirm all historical revelations without creating artificial divisions in their source, the Hanafi school protects the student and the teacher from projecting the limitations of human language onto the pre-eternal nature of the Creator.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Wisdom of Abrogation (*Naskh*)

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi utilises the discussion of previous books in *Kitab al-Tawhid* to outline the relationship between divine wisdom and the legal phenomenon of abrogation (*al-naskh*). Sceptics and external detractors frequently argued that if the previous books were true guidance from an All-Knowing God, the introduction of a new book that alters or replaces earlier legal rulings implies a change of mind or an internal contradiction within the divine plan (*al-bada'*).

Imam al-Maturidi masterfully refutes this by anchoring the discussion in the eternal attribute of **Wisdom (*al-Hikmah*)**. He explains that *Naskh* is not a correction of a past mistake, but a deliberate, pre-planned transition calculated by the ultimate Physician of humanity. While the core theological foundation (*al-usul*)—such as monotheism, accountability, and the pillars of virtue—remains entirely immutable across every scripture, the secondary legal applications (*al-furu'*) were specifically tailored to the unique capacities, societal developments, and historical conditions of different nations. When the *Injil* altered certain dietary restrictions found in the *Tawrah*, or when the *Qur'an* finalised the universal law for all mankind, it manifested the perfect, fluid application of divine care. Revelation adapts its remedies across history while its core truth remains entirely constant.

3. The Epistemology of Textual Alteration (*Tahrif*)

A major theological milestone developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the precise epistemological metric used to evaluate the scriptures currently held by non-

Muslim communities. Factions often fluctuated between total, uncritical acceptance of these texts or an exaggerated, immediate rejection that denied any traces of original divine truth within them.

Imam al-Maturidi charts the definitive, balanced Sunni path by applying a rigorous textual critique. He proves that while the original books given to Musa (as) and ʿĪsā (as) were immaculate revelations, their historical preservation was compromised by human intervention, giving rise to textual alteration (*taḥrīf*). He distinguishes between alteration of meaning (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*, misinterpreting the text) and alteration of the physical text (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*, rewriting, altering, or deleting the actual words).

Because the previous nations lacked the mass-transmitted, structurally infallible chain of custody (*al-tawātur*) that protects the Islamic tradition, their texts became mixed with human commentary and historical additions. Therefore, the Maturidi methodology instructs the believer to view current biblical texts with scholarly caution: whatever aligns perfectly with the criteria of the Qur'an is accepted as surviving truth, whatever contradicts it is rejected as human insertion, and whatever is unmentioned is left aside without definitive affirmation or denial.

The Sovereign Custody: The Divine Promise of Qur'anic Preservation vs. Human Stewardship

To understand why the Qur'an stands completely insulated from this historical vulnerability, one must look at the radical shift in the divine mechanism of textual custody. For all prior scriptures, Allah Most High left the physical preservation of the pages as a test of fidelity for human scholars, rabbis, and monks. As the Qur'an explicitly records regarding the previous nations, they were given the books *"because they were entrusted with the protection of the Book of Allah."* (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:44). When those human stewards succumbed to political pressure, spiritual decay, or greed, they corrupted the text, leading directly to the tragedy of *taḥrīf*.

With the descent of the final revelation, however, Allah Most High permanently dissolved human stewardship and took absolute, sovereign custody of the text Himself. He issued an immutable, eternal decree that guarantees the absolute preservation of the final book until the end of time, declaring:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"Indeed, it is We who sent down the Message [the Qur'an], and indeed, We will be its guardian."
(Surah al-Hijr, 15:9).

This singular divine promise makes the Qur'an entirely unique within the cosmic history of scriptures. By utilising the strongest linguistic emphasis tools in the Arabic language (*Inna* and *Lām al-Muzahlaqah*), Allah Most High announced that His pre-eternal, uncreated Power is the active shield permanently guarding the text.

As a direct result of this sovereign custody, the Qur'an is divinely protected from both *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (the alteration of a single letter or vowel) and *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (the systematic erasure of its core monotheistic meanings). Allah willed that the final guidance to humanity must remain an absolute, unpolluted mirror of His uncreated Speech (*Kalāmullah*).

To execute this divine protection within human history, Allah blessed the *Ummah* with *al-tawātur*—an unbroken infrastructure of millions of believers in every generation memorising the exact same text, letter for letter, syllable for syllable, from East to West. This pristine continuity transforms the Qur'an into the ultimate, unyielding Criterion (*al-Furqān*).

While the believer looks upon prior texts with academic caution, recognizing the scars of human alteration, they look upon the Holy Qur'an with absolute, unblinking certainty (*yaqīn*), secure in the knowledge that every single verse

they recite is the exact, uncorrupted word of God, perfectly preserved by the Sovereign of the cosmos

4. The School Dynamics: Maturidi and Ash'ari Harmony

It is highly beneficial for the advanced reader to note the profound harmony between the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools on this specific eschatological and historical boundary. Both schools comprise the unified front of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* in validating that the original *Tawrah* and *Injil* were absolute, binding revelations of light.

The minor technical discussions between them in this chapter revolve around the concept of whether those who followed the original, unaltered versions of the previous books before the advent of Islam are classified as believers (*Mu'minun*) in the sight of Allah. The Maturidi school, strictly aligning with the legal declarations of Imam Abu Hanifah, emphasises that anyone who followed the true, uncorrupted prophetic message of their era was fully anchored in valid faith (*iman*). With the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, however, the *Qur'an* acts as the universal *Furqan*—the ultimate criterion and final filter. It supersedes and encapsulates all prior disclosures, making active submission to the final message the sole remaining path to salvation, a position fully shared by the Ash'ari masters.

Conclusion

Allah revealed scriptures to many of His prophets, including the Scrolls of Ibrahim, the Tawrah, the Zabur, and the Injil. These revelations constituted genuine guidance for their communities and formed part of Allah's ongoing guidance of humanity. Muslims therefore believe in all the revealed books while recognising the Qur'an as the final, preserved, and authoritative revelation sent for all mankind.

PART III

BELIEF IN THE BOOKS (الإيمان بالكتب)

Chapter 14: The Qur'an Is the Speech of Allah

Among all the books revealed by Allah, the Qur'an occupies a unique and unparalleled position. It is the final revelation, the greatest miracle of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the ultimate source of guidance for humanity until the Day of Judgement.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is not merely a religious text, a historical document, or a collection of moral teachings. Rather, it is the Speech of Allah (*Kalam Allah*) revealed to His final Messenger ﷺ through the Angel Jibril.

For this reason, the scholars regarded the doctrine of the Qur'an as one of the most important subjects of Islamic creed.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ

"And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the Speech of Allah."
(Qur'an 9:6)

This verse explicitly describes the Qur'an as **Kalam Allah** — the Speech of Allah.

Allah also says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We shall preserve it."
(Qur'an 15:9)

Unlike previous revelations, Allah Himself guarantees the preservation of the Qur'an.

Allah further says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ

"The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed as guidance for mankind."
(Qur'an 2:185)

These verses establish the divine origin, preservation, and universal guidance of the Qur'an.

Prophetic Evidence

'Uthman ibn 'Affan رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an (*Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an*), Hadith no. 5027.

Abu Umamah al-Bahili رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "Recite the Qur'an, for it will come on the Day of Resurrection as an intercessor for its companions."
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of the Prayer of Travellers (*Kitab Salat al-Musafirin*), Hadith no. 804.

These narrations illustrate the special status of the Qur'an and the importance of developing a relationship with it.

Discussion

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over a period of approximately twenty-three years.

Jibril عليه السلام conveyed the revelation from Allah to the Prophet ﷺ, who recited it to his Companions. The Companions memorised it, wrote it down, taught it to others, and transmitted it with extraordinary precision.

This process of memorisation and transmission continued generation after generation until the present day.

Today, millions of Muslims across the world have memorised the Qur'an in its entirety, preserving the same words that were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ more than fourteen centuries ago.

The preservation of the Qur'an remains one of the most remarkable features of Islamic civilisation and one of the clearest manifestations of Allah's promise:

> "**Indeed, We shall preserve it.**" (Qur'an 15:9)

The Qur'an and the Speech of Allah

One of the most important theological questions addressed by the scholars concerns the nature of the Qur'an itself.

When Muslims say that the Qur'an is the Speech of Allah, they mean that it originates from Allah and is one of His attributes.

Just as Allah possesses knowledge, power, will, and life, He also possesses speech.

The Qur'an is therefore fundamentally different from ordinary human speech.

Human beings speak through created voices, created languages, and created sounds.

The Speech of Allah belongs to the Creator and must be understood in a manner befitting His majesty.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The doctrine of Divine Speech (*Kalam Allah*) represents one of the most fiercely contested battlegrounds in the history of Islamic thought. The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni resolution to this monumental issue. This tradition approaches the Qur'an through a precise intellectual methodology that simultaneously asserts the pre-eternal nature of divine attributes while fully accounting for the temporal, physical vessels through which humanity interacts with revelation.

1. The Multi-Layered Formula of al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah constructs the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish what would become the absolute, unyielding baseline for Sunni orthodoxy. The Imam states with immaculate precision: *"The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah, written in our manuscripts (masahif), memorised in our hearts, recited upon our tongues, and revealed to our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ."* This single sentence is a masterpiece of systematic theology. It was specifically formulated to target the core errors of two opposing extremist factions of his era:

- **The Mu'tazilite Deletion (*Ta'til*):** The Mu'tazilites excelled at pure rationalism, arguing that because the Qur'an is heard in time, composed of chapters, and arranged in audio sequences, the Speech of Allah must be a created entity (*makhluq*) separate from His Essence.

- **The Unrefined Extremists (*Hashwiyyah*):** On the opposite extreme, literalist factions fell into severe anthropomorphism, asserting that the actual vocal chords of the reciter, the physical sound waves travelling through the air, and the physical ink and paper of the book were themselves pre-eternal and uncreated.

Imam Abu Hanifah dismantled both deviations through a brilliant technical distinction. He stated: *"Our pronouncing of the Qur'an is created, our writing of it is created, and our reciting of it is created, but the Qur'an itself is uncreated."* This means that while the human instruments of transmission—our voices, tongues, ink, and paper—are inherently contingent, temporal accidents (*hadith*), the actual *Content*, the *Meaning*, and the *Divine Message* being expressed through those physical media is the absolute, uncreated, pre-eternal Speech of Allah.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Inner Speech (*Kalam Nafsi*)

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi takes this foundational Hanafi maxim and elevates it into a sophisticated philosophical system in *Kitab al-Tawhid*. To completely silence heretical objections, Imam al-Maturidi pioneered the definitive Sunni distinction between **Inner Speech (*Kalam Nafsi*)** and **Verbal/Formal Speech (*Kalam Lafzi*)**.

Imam al-Maturidi proves that speech is an essential, eternal attribute of perfection subsisting within the Divine Essence (*sifat al-ma'ani*). This essential *Kalam Nafsi* is a singular, continuous reality that is entirely free from sounds, letters, syntax, temporal beginnings, or physical sequences. Just as Allah's pre-eternal Knowledge encompasses all things simultaneously without being divided into separate chapters, His pre-eternal Speech is a unified attribute. When this uncreated inner speech is expressed to humanity in a form they can comprehend, it takes on the dress of human language. It is manifested as the Arabic Qur'an given to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, just as it was manifested as the Hebrew *Tawrah* given to Prophet Musa عليه السلام. The linguistic dress, the arrangement of words, and the vocal recitation are temporal manifestations (*al-nazm al-dall*), but the underlying Speech itself remains an uncreated, eternal reality of the Divine Essence.

3. Deep Analysis: Can the Eternal Speech of Allah Be Heard?

A profound, highly technical question within the inner circles of scholastic theology concerns whether the uncreated, pre-eternal Inner Speech (*Kalam Nafsi*) can actually be heard by human ears. When the Qur'an states that Allah spoke directly to Musa (*"And Allah spoke to Moses with direct speech"*, Surah an-Nisa, 4:164), did Prophet Musa hear the pre-eternal attribute itself, or did he hear a created auditory expression?

In the Hanafi-Maturidi school, the definitive stance is that **the pre-eternal, uncreated attribute of Speech (*Kalam Nafsi*) cannot be heard directly by**

human auditory senses. Because human hearing is a created, finite faculty that structurally requires physical sound waves, acoustics, a specific volume, and a sequential timeline (hearing one word *after* another), it is inherently incapable of directly grasping an uncreated divine attribute that is completely free of sound, letters, and sequence.

Therefore, Imam al-Maturidi clarifies that what Prophet Musa heard, and what humanity hears during recitation, is a created, majestic auditory miracle (*sawt khaliqan*) brought into being by Allah to represent, convey, and point toward His unchanging, eternal Inner Speech. The sound waves are created to serve as an infallible vehicle, but the *Kalam Nafsi* itself remains transcendingly hidden within the Divine Essence. This position protects the absolute transcendence (*tanzih*) of Allah's attributes, ensuring that the limits of material acoustics are never projected onto the Creator.

4. Comparative Theology: The Maturidi vs. Ash'ari Position on Hearing Kalam

While both the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools stand united as the vanguard of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*, they diverge on this specific, intricate point of epistemology and divine communication. As a work anchored firmly in the Hanafi-Maturidi lineage, it is essential to outline these differences with precision, highlighting the technical superiority and internal consistency of the Maturidi stance:

- **The Ash'ari Position:** The mainstream Ash'ari masters, led by Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, maintained a contrasting view regarding the events at Mount Sinai. They asserted that it is rationally and textually possible to hear the pre-eternal, uncreated *Kalam Nafsi* directly, without the medium of created sounds or letters. They argued that just as the believers will see the Divine Essence in the Hereafter through a unique form of perception that does not imply direction or distance, Prophet Musa was blessed with an

extraordinary, non-acoustic perception that allowed him to hear the uncreated attribute itself.

- **The Maturidi Refutation and Position:** Imam al-Maturidi and the classical Hanafi theologians strongly counter this view, arguing that it creates a structural contradiction in definition. In *Kitab al-Tawhid*, it is proven that "hearing" (*al-sam'*) by definition requires acoustic composition, sequence, and sound waves. To say someone "heard" something that completely lacks sound and sequence is a semantic impossibility that muddies the clarity of theological discourse.

  The Maturidi school favors the position that Allah created a special, miraculous sound in the environment—originating from no specific direction—that explicitly translated the divine intent to Prophet Musa's ears. Prophet Musa heard a created acoustic expression that perfectly mirrored and conveyed the uncreated Word of Allah. This preferred Maturidi stance maintains a tighter rational boundary; it keeps human faculties strictly confined to perceiving created media, while safeguarding the uncreated *Kalam Nafsi* from being subjected to the mechanics of worldly perception.

5. Deconstructing the Fallacies of Sequential Time

A major focus within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the rational deconstruction of the Mu'tazilite claim that text containing historical narratives (such as stories of Pharaoh or the people of 'Ad) must be created, because those events happened in time. Factions argued: how could Allah speak about Pharaoh in the past tense before Pharaoh was even created?

Imam al-Maturidi refutes this semantic confusion by linking *Kalam* directly to the eternal attribute of **Knowledge (*al-ʿIlm*)**. He explains that Allah, existing completely outside the constraints of the temporal timeline, eternally knows every event that will ever unfold in the cosmos. His pre-eternal Speech simply reports these realities in accordance with His infinite, unchanging

awareness. The shift in human tenses—past, present, and future—is a limitation of human grammar and sequential time, not a limitation of the Creator's eternal attribute. Therefore, when a believer recites the historical accounts within the Qur'an, they are engaging with an eternal, divine disclosure that was never subject to a point of origin.

6. The Unified Sunni Anchor for the Common Muslim and Scholar

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on literal textual respect with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced epistemological framework, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition provides the student, the teacher, and the common Muslim with an unshakeable intellectual anchor. This methodology ensures that when a believer holds the physical *mushaf*, they treat it with the absolute highest level of reverence, recognizing that what they are reading, memorising, and reciting is the authentic, unaltered Word of the Lord of the Worlds. It lifts the study of the Qur'an above the realms of mere human literature or historical documentation, transforming the act of recitation into a direct, living connection with an uncreated attribute of the Divine.

Conclusion

The Qur'an is the final revelation of Allah and the greatest miracle of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is the Speech of Allah, preserved by divine promise and transmitted through generations of Muslims. Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi regarded belief in the Qur'an as a central component of Islamic creed and a defining characteristic of the faith of Ahl al-Sunnah. Through the Qur'an, humanity continues to receive guidance, wisdom, and direction until the Day of Judgement.

PART IV

BELIEF IN THE MESSENGERS (الإيمان بالرسل)

Chapter 15: Why Do We Need Prophets?

One of the six pillars of faith is belief in the prophets and messengers of Allah.

From Adam عليه السلام to Muhammad ﷺ, Allah sent prophets to guide humanity, teach divine revelation, and call people to worship Him alone. Through them, mankind learned the purpose of life, the nature of worship, and the path leading to salvation.

The sending of prophets is among the greatest manifestations of Allah's mercy towards creation.

Without prophetic guidance, human beings would possess reason but lack certainty concerning many of the most important questions of existence.

For this reason, belief in the prophets occupies a central place in Islamic creed.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ

"Messengers as bearers of glad tidings and warnings, so that mankind would have no argument against Allah after the messengers."
(Qur'an 4:165)

Allah also says:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

"We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, saying: Worship Allah and avoid false gods."
(Qur'an 16:36)

And Allah says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds."
(Qur'an 21:107)

These verses demonstrate that the prophets were sent to guide humanity, establish proof, and convey Allah's mercy to creation.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."**
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Prophets (*Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya'*), Hadith no. 3443; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2365.

Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"There was no prophet before me except that it was his duty to guide his nation to the best of what he knew for them and warn them against the worst of what he knew for them."**
>
> Narrated by Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Leadership (*Kitab al-Imarah*), Hadith no. 1844.

These narrations demonstrate that the mission of every prophet was to guide people towards truth and protect them from misguidance.

Discussion

A person may ask: if Allah has given human beings intellect and reason, why is revelation necessary?

This question occupied the classical theologians of Ahl al-Sunnah, most notably Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi.

Reason is undoubtedly one of Allah's greatest gifts. Through reason, a person may recognise the existence of a Creator and appreciate many moral truths.

However, reason alone cannot answer every question.

Reason may indicate that Allah exists, but it cannot independently determine how Allah wishes to be worshipped. Reason cannot establish the details of prayer, fasting, charity, or pilgrimage. Reason cannot provide certainty regarding the realities of Paradise, Hell, the angels, resurrection, or divine decree. These matters require revelation.

For this reason, Allah sent prophets to teach mankind what reason alone could never fully discover.

The prophets therefore complete and perfect what human reason begins.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the existential necessity of prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*). This tradition approaches the sending of messengers not as a random or arbitrary event, but as a direct requirement of divine wisdom (*Hikmah*) and an indispensable epistemological anchor for the human intellect (*al-'aql*).

1. The Fixed Universality of Prophethood in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish an unyielding foundational baseline: the absolute necessity of affirming all prophets of Allah without a single exception or distinction in their core message. The Imam targets a core error of early sectarian and non-Muslim groups who attempted to create false dichotomies between the missions of various prophets.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically proves that from Adam عليه السلام to Muhammad ﷺ, every single prophet was sent with a completely unified theological foundation (*al-usul*). While their localised laws and secondary legal applications (*al-furu'*) shifted across history to match the unique needs of different civilisations, their primary creed (*'aqidah*) never wavered. Every messenger taught absolute monotheism (*tawhid*), affirmed the reality of the unseen world, warned of the Day of Judgment, and called for internal spiritual purification. For the Hanafi school, to reject the integrity of a single

prophet is to reject the entire chain of divine guidance, as they all represent the immaculate execution of the same divine decree.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemological Limits of Reason

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant intellectual defense against the deistic philosophies of his era—most notably the *Sumaniyyah* and the *Barahimah*, who argued that human intellect was entirely self-sufficient and that prophethood was therefore redundant.

Imam al-Maturidi deconstructs this claim by defining the exact structural boundaries of the human mind. He argues that while the human intellect is a powerful, divinely bestowed instrument perfectly capable of independently observing the cosmos and concluding that a single, wise Creator exists, it remains inherently bound by its material limitations. The intellect can recognise *that* a Creator exists, but it cannot independently uncover *what* that Creator commands. Reason alone cannot self-generate the specific details of ritual worship, determine the explicit boundaries of divine law (*Shari'ah*), or provide concrete details regarding the unseen realm of the grave, Paradise, and Hell. Therefore, Imam al-Maturidi establishes that prophethood is not an option or a luxury; it is an absolute epistemological necessity. The prophet serves as the essential external communicator who provides the precise textual content that the intellect realizes it desperately requires but cannot self-produce.

3. The Metaphysics of Divine Wisdom (*Hikmah*) and Human Variety

A crowning achievement of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, uniquely championed by Imam al-Maturidi, is the linking of prophethood to the eternal attribute of **Wisdom (*al-Hikmah*)**. He explains that because Allah is eternally Wise, and because His attribute of *Takwin* (Bringing into Being) operates in perfect alignment with that wisdom, the human being was

purposefully created with an internal conflict: the capacity for high rational thought alongside low animalistic desires (*shahwah*) and anger (*ghadab*). Imam al-Maturidi observes that if humanity were left entirely to its own devices without an objective, divinely protected standard, the intellect would inevitably become hijacked by personal desires, cultural biases, and temporal greed. Human factions would fracture into perpetual moral chaos, rewriting the definitions of right and wrong to suit their immediate political or material interests. Divine *Hikmah* therefore mandates that an objective, infallible human exemplar—the prophet—must be sent to act as an unyielding moral and spiritual compass. The prophets do not come to suppress human reason; rather, they arrive to liberate human reason from the tyranny of whims and worldly desires, allowing the mind to function in its pure, uncorrupted state.

4. Comparative Theology: The Maturidi vs. Ash'ari Position on Necessity

While both the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools stand united as the vanguard of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*, they diverge on the specific technical layout regarding the rational necessity of sending prophets:

- **The Ash'ari Position:** The Ash'ari masters emphasise absolute divine voluntarism. They argue that the sending of prophets cannot be described as "necessary" (*wajib*) upon Allah in any rational sense, as nothing can impose an obligation upon the Sovereign Creator. For them, sending prophets is a pure, uncaused act of divine grace (*fadl*) that is rationally possible but only known to be true once it textually occurs.

- **The Maturidi Position:** Imam al-Maturidi and the Hanafi scholars favour a more nuanced framework anchored in the divine attribute of Wisdom. They clarify that while nothing can ever obligate Allah from the outside, His own eternal, perfect nature of **Wisdom (*Hikmah*)** makes the sending of prophets an absolute necessity for human fulfillment. Because Allah created a universe with purpose, and created humans with accountability, leaving them completely without guidance would contradict the very definition of His

eternal Wisdom. Therefore, the Maturidi school asserts that given the way Allah chose to design human existence, the sending of prophets is a rational and structural necessity to manifest His justice and mercy.

5. The Unified Anchor for the Common Muslim and Scholar

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on the absolute unity of the prophetic mission with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced metaphysical framework on wisdom and intellect, this tradition provides an unshakeable shield for the common Muslim, the student of knowledge, and the teacher. It transforms belief in the messengers from a simple historical checklist into a profound realisation of divine care. The reader understands that without the prophets, humanity would be left to drift blindly in a sea of philosophical speculation, making active submission to the legacy of the messengers the ultimate expression of sound, uncorrupted human intellect.

Conclusion

The prophets were sent by Allah to guide humanity, teach revelation, and establish proof. While reason can recognise many truths, it cannot independently provide the guidance required for salvation. Through the prophets, Allah clarified the purpose of life, the nature of worship, and the path to eternal success. For this reason, belief in the messengers forms an essential pillar of Islamic faith and one of the greatest manifestations of divine mercy.

PART IV

BELIEF IN THE MESSENGERS (الإيمان بالرسل)

Chapter 16: The Attributes of the Prophets

The prophets and messengers occupy the highest rank among human beings. Allah selected them from among His creation, entrusted them with revelation, and made them guides for humanity.

Because of the immense responsibility placed upon them, Allah bestowed upon the prophets qualities that enabled them to fulfil their mission perfectly.

The scholars of Islamic theology discussed these qualities in detail and identified a number of attributes that are necessary for prophethood. These attributes distinguish the prophets from ordinary people and ensure the reliability of the message they conveyed.

Understanding these qualities strengthens a believer's confidence in revelation and deepens appreciation for the wisdom of Allah in choosing His messengers.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says regarding Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام:

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَّبِيًّا

"Mention in the Book Ibrahim. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet."
(Qur'an 19:41)

Regarding Prophet Musa عليه السلام, Allah says:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا

"Indeed, he was chosen, and he was a messenger and a prophet."
(Qur'an 19:51)

Regarding Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Allah says:

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

"Nor does he speak from his own desire. It is nothing but revelation that is revealed."
(Qur'an 53:3-4)

These verses demonstrate the truthfulness, integrity, and reliability of the prophets.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "The people will faint on the Day of Resurrection, and I will be the first to recover consciousness. Then I will find Musa holding one of the legs of the Throne."
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Oppressions (*Kitab al-Mazalim*), Hadith no. 2412; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2374.

This narration illustrates the lofty rank granted to the prophets by Allah.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "I am the closest of all people to 'Isa ibn Maryam in this world and the next. The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Prophets (*Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya'*), Hadith no. 3443; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2365.

Discussion

The theologians of Ahl al-Sunnah generally summarised the essential qualities of the prophets under four headings:

Truthfulness (Sidq)

Every prophet is completely truthful.

A prophet cannot lie regarding Allah, revelation, or the message entrusted to him. If lying were possible for a prophet, confidence in revelation itself would become impossible.

Trustworthiness (Amanah)

The prophets faithfully conveyed what Allah revealed to them.

They neither concealed revelation nor altered it for personal gain.

Conveyance (Tabligh)

The prophets fulfilled their duty of delivering Allah's message to their people.

No prophet abandoned his mission or neglected the responsibility entrusted to him.

Intelligence (Fatanah)

The prophets possessed exceptional intelligence, wisdom, and sound judgement.

This enabled them to understand revelation, respond to objections, guide their communities, and lead people towards the truth.

In addition to these qualities, the scholars taught that the prophets are protected by Allah from deliberate falsehood and from major sins that would undermine their credibility as messengers.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the moral, intellectual, and physical perfection of the prophets. This tradition approaches prophetic attributes not as random human virtues, but as necessary theological safeguards that ensure the absolute reliability of divine communication.

1. The Multi-Layered Doctrine of Infallibility (ʿ*Ismah*) in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah constructs the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish the unyielding baseline for the absolute protection of the prophets

from sin (*ʿIsmah*). The Imam explicitly targets early heterodox factions who dangerously asserted that prophets were capable of falling into major sins or intentional deception.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically categorises the layers of prophetic infallibility in his text, declaring that all prophets are completely free from minor sins of a degrading nature, absolute disbelief (*kufr*), and major sins (*al-kaba'ir*) both before and after their commission as messengers. The Hanafi school argues that if a prophet were capable of committing a major sin, the divine command to unconditionally follow their example (*Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:31*) would force humanity into the rational absurdity of following an act of disobedience. For Imam Abu Hanifah, any apparent slips (*zallat*) recorded in scripture regarding the prophets are strictly classified as human errors in choosing a less-preferred permissible option over a higher one (*tark al-awla*), entirely free from any moral corruption or defiance of divine command.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemological Necessity of *Fatanah* and *Sidq*

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant rational defense of the traits of Truthfulness (*Sidq*) and Supreme Intelligence (*Fatanah*). He addresses a fundamental cognitive question: how does the human mind distinguish a genuine prophet from a fraudulent claimant or a madman?

Imam al-Maturidi proves that the attribute of *Fatanah* is an absolute rational prerequisite for the prophetic mission. A prophet must possess an immaculate, piercing intellect capable of receiving transcendent, non-material revelation without losing psychological stability. Furthermore, this exceptional intelligence is the weapon through which the prophet executes his social and theological duties—dismantling the logical fallacies of

idolaters, answering complex legal questions, and establishing absolute proof over his community.

He couples this with *Sidq*, explaining that because the prophet acts as the human mouthpiece for the uncreated Speech of Allah (*Kalam Nafsi*), his personal truthfulness must be structurally absolute. If a prophet were capable of telling a lie in his daily life, the boundary of his truthfulness regarding revelation would be compromised, rendering the entire system of divine communication epistemologically unreliable.

3. The Functional Mechanics of Conveyance (*Tabligh*) and Trustworthiness (*Amanah*)

A major theological milestone developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the precise deconstruction of how *Amanah* and *Tabligh* preserve the purity of divine law (*Shari'ah*). Esoteric and heretical factions often claimed that the prophets hid parts of the revelation, passing down secret, hidden meanings (*batin*) exclusively to an elite inner circle while leaving the common Muslim with deficient, superficial text.

Imam al-Maturidi refutes this speculative dilution with unyielding vigor. He proves that the very essence of the prophetic appointment requires absolute *Tabligh*—the total, uncompromised delivery of every single letter revealed by Allah. The prophets operate under perfect *Amanah*; they function as immaculate mirrors reflecting the divine command exactly as it was sent down, without adding a single human word out of their own desire or concealing a warning out of fear of societal backlash. This key insight shields the student and the teacher from any esoteric overinterpretations, ensuring that the explicit, public texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah are recognized as the complete and final manual for human salvation.

4. Prophets as the Pinnacle of Human Design

Ultimately, the systematic focus on prophetic attributes in the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition serves to anchor the concept of divine wisdom (*Hikmah*). Imam al-Maturidi demonstrates that because Allah is eternally Wise, and because His creation operates with absolute purpose, He designed the prophets as the absolute peak of human potential. They are not semi-divine beings, nor are they ordinary mortals wandering in confusion; they are the flawless bridge where divine light meets human action.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on absolute moral purity with Imam al-Maturidi's rigorous epistemological validation of prophetic traits, this tradition provides a comprehensive intellectual shield. It transforms our understanding of the messengers from a static historical narrative into a living realisation of how uncorrupted human intellect, under the protection of divine grace, serves as the ultimate guide for human flourishing and eternal success in the Hereafter.

Conclusion

The prophets were chosen by Allah to convey revelation and guide humanity. To fulfil this responsibility, Allah endowed them with truthfulness, trustworthiness, intelligence, and complete commitment to conveying His message. Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi both emphasise that confidence in revelation depends upon confidence in the integrity of the prophets. For this reason, belief in their noble qualities forms an important component of Islamic creed.

PART IV

BELIEF IN THE MESSENGERS (الإيمان بالرسل)

Chapter 17: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: The Final Messenger

Among the pillars of Islamic faith is belief that Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ﷺ is the final prophet and messenger sent by Allah to humanity.

Muslims believe that he was chosen by Allah to convey the final revelation, complete the chain of prophethood, and serve as a mercy to all creation. Through him, Allah perfected the religion of Islam and completed His favour upon mankind.

For this reason, belief in the finality of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not a secondary matter but a fundamental component of Islamic creed.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَـٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets."
(Qur'an 33:40)

This verse explicitly establishes that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the final prophet.

Allah also says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا

"We have not sent you except to all mankind as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner."
(Qur'an 34:28)

Unlike previous prophets who were sent to particular nations, Muhammad ﷺ was sent to all humanity.

Allah further says:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your religion."
(Qur'an 5:3)

The completion of religion is inseparable from the finality of prophethood.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "My example and the example of the prophets before me is like that of a man who built a house and completed it except for one brick. People would admire it and say: 'If only this brick were placed.' I am that brick, and I am the Seal of the Prophets."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Manaqib*), Hadith no. 3535; and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Virtues (*Kitab al-Fada'il*), Hadith no. 2286.

Jubayr ibn Mut'im رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"I am Muhammad, and I am Ahmad, and I am al-Mahi through whom Allah erases disbelief, and I am al-Hashir at whose feet people will be gathered, and I am al-'Aqib."

The scholars explained that **al-'Aqib** means the one after whom there is no prophet.

Narrated by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 3532; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2354.

Discussion

Muslims love and honour all the prophets of Allah. However, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ possesses characteristics that distinguish him from those who came before him.

He was sent to all humanity rather than a specific nation.

His revelation, the Holy Qur'an, remains divinely preserved in its entiret.

His law remains valid until the Day of Judgement.

And most importantly, no prophet will come after him.

This does not diminish the status of previous prophets. Rather, it reflects the completion of the divine mission that began with Adam عليه السلام and continued through generations of messengers.

The finality of prophethood also preserves the unity of religion. If prophethood were to continue indefinitely, revelation would never be complete. By making Muhammad ﷺ the final messenger, Allah completed the religion and provided a permanent source of guidance through the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the finality and absolute supremacy of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. This tradition approaches *Khatam al-Nubuwwah* not merely as a historical endpoint, but as a critical epistemological seal that protects the finality of divine law (*Shari'ah*) and guarantees the permanent unity of the Ummah.

1. The Definitive Status of the Prophet in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish an unyielding foundational baseline: the absolute necessity of affirming that Muhammad ﷺ is the final prophet, the leader of the messengers (*Imam al-Anbiya'*), and the beloved of the Lord of the Worlds (*Habib Rabb al-ʿAlamin*). The Imam explicitly targets heretical and fringe movements who dangerously asserted that inspiration (*ilham*) or spiritual elevation could bypass or succeed the prophetic office.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically proves that the prophetic line is structurally closed, declaring that anyone who claims to receive new divine legislation or text after the departure of the Prophet ﷺ has committed an act

of open disbelief (*kufr*). The Hanafi school argues that if any form of prophetic communication were to continue after him, the divine declaration that religion has been perfected (*Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3*) would become meaningless. For Imam Abu Hanifah, the supremacy of the Prophet ﷺ is a pre-eternal decree; he was the final brick in the grand wall of guidance, making his law the ultimate, unalterable filter through which all human actions must be weighed until the trumpet is blown.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemological Finality of Revelation

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant intellectual defence of the universality and finality of the Muhammadan message. He addresses a fundamental cognitive question: why did the divine system of sending new prophets to different nations, which existed for thousands of years, permanently stop with one specific man?

Imam al-Maturidi deconstructs this by analysing the concept of religious completion. He explains that previous prophets were sent with localised laws (*furu'*) designed specifically to remedy the temporary cultural and moral illnesses of their particular societies. Because those past civilisations lacked the global infrastructure to transmit an unchanging message across the entire earth, text became altered, and new messengers were continually required to restore the light.

However, through the finality of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Allah revealed a universal, comprehensive legal and ethical framework designed structurally to adapt to every culture, geography, and era without ever requiring revision. The message of the Prophet ﷺ is epistemologically self-sufficient; it contains the ultimate principles of wisdom and justice required for human flourishing until the end of time, rendering any subsequent claims to prophethood a rational and textual absurdity.

3. Deconstructing the Fallacies of Modernist Alterations

A major theological milestone developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the precise deconstruction of how the absolute finality of the Prophet's message shields the Ummah from internal and external deviations. Factions across history have attempted to graft false notions of ongoing prophethood or split the definition of "Seal" (*Khatam*) to mean an honorary title rather than an actual cessation of messengers.

Imam al-Maturidi refutes this semantic manipulation with unyielding vigor. He proves that the word *Khatam* in the Arabic language signifies both the peak of perfection and the physical locking or sealing of a document to prevent any further insertions. To claim that a prophet can appear after Muhammad ﷺ—even if that claimant asserts they are merely following his law—is a direct assault on the absolute self-sufficiency of the final revelation.

The Maturidi methodology instructs the student and the teacher that the text of Surah al-Ahzab (33:40) stands as an iron barrier. It ensures that the common Muslim recognise the Qur'an and Sunnah as the absolute, complete, and unalterable criteria for truth, guarding the mind against the deceptive charisma of false messiahs and modern sectarian innovators.

4. The Cosmic Universality of the Muhammadan Mission

Ultimately, the systematic focus on the finality of prophethood in the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition serves to manifest the eternal attribute of divine wisdom (*Hikmah*). Imam al-Maturidi demonstrates that because Allah is eternally Wise, and because His creation operates with absolute purpose, He made the final messenger a mercy to the entire cosmos (*Rahmatan lil-ʿAlamin*). His mission is not bounded by the borders of Arabia or the timeline of the seventh century; it is an active, living authority that governs all nations and all generations.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on the absolute supremacy of the Prophet ﷺ with Imam al-Maturidi's rigorous epistemological validation of religious completion, this tradition provides a comprehensive intellectual shield. It transforms our understanding of *Khatam al-Nubuwwah* from a static historical event into a profound realisation of divine care, anchoring the heart of every believer in the unshakeable certainty that following the final messenger is the ultimate expression of sound, uncorrupted human intellect.

Conclusion

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the final messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. Through him, Allah completed revelation, perfected the religion, and provided guidance for all humanity until the Day of Judgement. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all affirm that no prophet will come after him. Belief in his finality therefore remains a central pillar of Islamic creed and a defining feature of the faith of Ahl al-Sunnah.

PART V

BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY (الإيمان باليوم الآخر)

Chapter 18: Death, the Grave, and the First Stage of the Hereafter

Belief in the Last Day is one of the six pillars of faith. It includes belief in everything that occurs after death, including the questioning of the grave, the life of *Barzakh*, resurrection, judgement, Paradise, and Hell.

Death is not the end of existence. Rather, it marks the beginning of a new stage of life.

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ frequently reminded his Companions about death and encouraged them to prepare for what comes after it. The scholars likewise regarded reflection upon death as a means of strengthening faith and encouraging obedience to Allah.

The first stage of the Hereafter begins not on the Day of Resurrection, but at the moment a person's earthly life comes to an end.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

"Every soul shall taste death."
(Qur'an 3:185)

Allah also says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ۝ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ۚ كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ۖ وَمِن وَرَائِهِم بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

"Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: 'My Lord, send me back so that I may do righteous deeds in what I left behind.' No! It is only a word he speaks. And behind them is a barrier (Barzakh) until the Day they are resurrected."
(Qur'an 23:99-100)

Allah further says concerning the people of Pharaoh:

النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا

"The Fire; they are exposed to it morning and evening."
(Qur'an 40:46)

The scholars cited this verse as evidence for punishment before the Day of Judgement.

Prophetic Evidence

'Uthman ibn 'Affan رضي الله عنه used to weep when standing by a grave. When asked about this, he replied that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

> "The grave is the first stage of the Hereafter. If a person is saved from it, what comes after it is easier. And if he is not saved from it, what comes after it is more severe."

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, Hadith no. 2308; Ibn Majah, Hadith no. 4267. Classified as Hasan by al-Tirmidhi and authenticated by numerous later scholars.

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib رضي الله عنه narrated the famous hadith describing the questioning of the grave, the condition of the believer, and the condition of the disbeliever after death.

Narrated by Abu Dawud, Hadith no. 4753; Ahmad in *Musnad Ahmad*; authenticated by numerous scholars including Ibn Hajar and others.

This narration is among the most important texts concerning the life of the grave.

Discussion

What Is Barzakh?

The Arabic word *Barzakh* refers to the intermediate stage between death and resurrection.

When a person dies, his earthly life comes to an end, but his existence continues. He enters a realm different from the life of this world and different from the life that will follow resurrection.

The precise nature of Barzakh belongs to the unseen and can only be known through revelation.

The Questioning of the Grave

According to authentic narrations, the deceased will be questioned regarding the most fundamental matters of faith.

The questions concern:

- Who is your Lord?
- What is your religion?
- Who is your prophet?

The believer answers correctly through the grace of Allah, while the disbeliever and hypocrite are unable to do so.

Bliss and Punishment in the Grave

The intermediate state of the grave is not uniform; rather, it is a variable reality depending entirely on faith and deeds.

For the righteous believer, it becomes a place of comfort, peace, and anticipation of Paradise.

For those who rejected Allah and persisted in disbelief, it becomes a place of distress and punishment.

The exact nature of these realities belongs to the unseen world, and Muslims accept them because they are established by revelation.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the eschatological transition into the intermediate realm (*al-Barzakh*). This tradition approaches the realities of death, the angelic interrogation, and the states of bliss or punishment not as allegorical warnings, but as objective, literal occurrences that mark the opening sequence of final accountability.

1. The Literal Defense of Eschatological Realities in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to explicitly affirm the objective, physical, and spiritual reality of the events of the grave. The Imam targets a core error of early heterodox rationalists—most notably sections of the Mu'tazilites and Kharijites—who dangerously asserted that because a buried corpse appears completely static and decaying to human observers, the punishment of the grave (*ʿAdhab al-Qabr*) and the interrogation by Munkar and Nakir must be rejected or reinterpreted as mere metaphors for psychological anxiety at the moment of death.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically dismantles this speculative dilution, declaring in his text that the pressure of the grave (*daghitat al-qabr*), the questioning by the two angels, and the return of the soul to the intermediate body are absolute, undeniable truths. The Hanafi school argues that the visual stillness of a corpse in a physical grave is completely irrelevant, as the deceased has transitioned into an entirely different dimension of existence governed by its own laws. For the Imam, to deny these states based on the limits of human sensory observation represents a dangerous epistemological flaw that undermines the absolute authority of mass-transmitted prophetic reports.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemology of the Intermediate Realm (*al-Barzakh*)

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant intellectual critique of materialistic skepticism regarding eschatology. He addresses a fundamental cognitive problem: how can the human mind rationally process and accept a state of existence where the body suffers or experiences bliss without exhibiting visible signs of physical trauma or movement?
Imam al-Maturidi solves this by returning to the core pillars of Sunni epistemology, explaining that human sensory perception (*al-ʿiyan*) is a blunt instrument designed strictly to navigate the material boundaries of this immediate earthly life. The realm of *Barzakh* is structurally an unseen reality (*ghayb*). He applies a rigorous rational rule: once the mind establishes the absolute truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ through miracles and mass-transmitted transmission, the intellect must fully submit to his descriptions of the unseen world.

He proves that just as a sleeping person can experience intense terror, pain, or profound joy in a vivid dream while their physical body remains entirely motionless to an outside observer, the soul in *Barzakh* experiences the actual reality of angelic interrogation and physical-spiritual recompense in a manner that completely eludes worldly human observation.

3. The Nature of the Soul (*al-Ruh*) and the Return of Consciousness

A major theological milestone developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the precise explanation of how consciousness and identity persist after the physical cessation of biological life. Factions often claimed that when the body dies, the entire human entity ceases to exist until the final resurrection, rendering any intermediate punishment or bliss impossible.

Imam al-Maturidi refutes this misunderstanding by clarifying the nature of the soul (*al-Ruh*). In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, the soul is a real, subtle entity that survives the destruction of its material vessel. Upon entering the grave, Allah restores a specific level of consciousness and sensory connection to the body, enabling the deceased to hear the footsteps of those leaving them, comprehend the severe presence of Munkar and Nakir, and experience the tactile weight of their answers.

This is anchored in the text of Surah Ghafir (40:46), where the exposure of Pharaoh's people to the fire morning and evening proves an active, ongoing state of consciousness long before the day they are resurrected. This key insight shields the student and the teacher from materialistic philosophies that reduce human existence to mere biology, anchoring faith in an unyielding realisation of continuous accountability.

4. The Pedagogical Shield and Spiritual Anchor

Ultimately, the systematic focus on the first stage of the Hereafter in this tradition serves as a vital pedagogical shield and a profound spiritual anchor for the common Muslim, the student of knowledge, and the teacher. It enforces a strict theological boundary: the grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a trench from the trenches of Hellfire.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on literal textual affirmation with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced epistemological framework, this methodology strips away modern complacency. It transforms the concept of death from a distant, abstract biological certainty into an immediate, living awareness that directly shapes a believer's internal character and outward actions. The reader realises that the very answers they will give to Munkar and Nakir are being written right now through their daily submission to Allah, perfectly anchoring active spiritual readiness within a logically airtight theological framework.

Conclusion

Death is not the end of human existence but the beginning of the Hereafter. After death, every person enters the realm of Barzakh and awaits resurrection. The questioning of the grave, as well as its bliss or punishment, are established by the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah and were affirmed by both Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi. Belief in these realities reminds the believer that earthly life is temporary and that preparation for the Hereafter should remain among the highest priorities of faith.

PART V

BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY (الإيمان باليوم الآخر)

Chapter 19: Resurrection and the Day of Judgement

One of the central teachings of Islam is that Allah will resurrect all human beings after death and gather them for judgement.

This belief distinguishes the Islamic worldview from those who imagine that death marks the end of existence or that human actions ultimately have no consequences. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds mankind that earthly life is temporary and that a day will come when every individual will stand before Allah and answer for his deeds.

The Day of Judgement is therefore not merely a future event; it is one of the foundations upon which faith, morality, and accountability are built.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُم بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ۝ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ

"Then, after that, you shall surely die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, you shall surely be raised."
(Qur'an 23:15-16)

Allah also says:

زَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن لَّن يُبْعَثُوا ۚ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ

"Those who disbelieve claim that they will never be resurrected. Say: Yes indeed, by my Lord, you shall surely be resurrected."
(Qur'an 64:7)

And Allah says:

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۝ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

"Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it."
(Qur'an 99:7-8)

These verses establish both resurrection and accountability.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "**People will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection barefoot, naked, and uncircumcised.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 6527; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2859.

'A'ishah رضي الله عنها asked:

> "**O Messenger of Allah, will men and women be looking at one another?**"

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

> "**The matter will be too serious for them to concern themselves with that.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 6527; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2859.

Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

> "**Allah will bring the believer close and screen him, then He will make him acknowledge his sins.**"
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 2440; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2768.

These narrations emphasise the reality and seriousness of the Day of Judgement.

Discussion

The Resurrection

At the end of time, Allah will command Israfil عليه السلام to blow the Trumpet.

Creation will perish.

Thereafter, Allah will resurrect mankind and bring them forth from their graves.

Just as Allah created humanity the first time, He is fully capable of recreating them.

The Qur'an repeatedly presents resurrection as a proof of Allah's power.

The Gathering

All human beings, from Adam عليه السلام until the final person born before the end of time, will be gathered together.

No king, ruler, scholar, prophet, or ordinary person will escape this gathering.

All will stand before Allah.

The Reckoning

Every person's deeds will be presented before him.

Nothing will be forgotten.

Nothing will be overlooked.

The smallest act of goodness and the smallest act of wrongdoing will be known.

This reality gives profound meaning to human actions. Every choice made in this life carries significance because every choice will ultimately be accounted for before Allah.

Divine Justice

The Day of Judgement represents the complete manifestation of divine justice.

In this world, many oppressors appear to escape accountability and many righteous people suffer hardship.

The Hereafter rectifies these apparent injustices.

Allah judges with absolute knowledge, absolute wisdom, and absolute justice.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding bodily resurrection (*al-ma'ad al-jasmani*) and the mechanics of the final reckoning. This tradition approaches the eschatological events not as abstract spiritual metaphors, but as real, tangible physical occurrences that vindicate the absolute sovereignty, justice (*'Adl*), and wisdom (*Hikmah*) of the Creator.

1. The Bodily Affirmation of Eschatological Realities in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish an unyielding, literal baseline for the events of the Last Day. The Imam explicitly targets early heterodox philosophers and fringe rationalist movements who, influenced by foreign Hellenistic concepts, dangerously asserted that the resurrection would be purely spiritual (*ruhani*) rather than physical. These factions argued that once a human body decomposes into soil, scatters across the earth, or is consumed by wild animals, its physical reconstruction becomes an impossibility.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically deconstructs this skepticism, explicitly stating in his text that the resurrection (*al-ba'th*), the weighing of deeds in the Scales (*al-Mizan*), the reading of the personal records (*tatair al-suhuf*), and the crossing of the Bridge (*al-Sirat*) are objective, physical realities. The Hanafi school establishes that a Muslim must believe that Allah will gather the exact same physical elements that existed in the worldly life, breathe life back into

them, and bring them forth. For the Imam, to doubt the physical restoration of the body is to limit the pre-eternal, absolute attribute of divine Power (*Qudrah*), which brought the entire cosmos into existence from absolute non-being with infinitely greater ease.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Physical Reconstruction

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant intellectual defence of the physical resurrection. He addresses a fundamental cognitive objection: if the dust of human bodies has mingled with the earth for millennia and been recycled into plants or other material forms, how can it be separated and reconstructed with its original individual identity?

Imam al-Maturidi solves this by returning to the relationship between divine Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Power. He explains that things can turn to dust or fade from human sight, but nothing can ever slip away from the infinite, pre-eternal awareness of Allah. He applies a rigorous rational proof based on the original creation (*al-bad'*): the intellect must recognize that creating something out of absolute nothingness (*al-ijad min al-adam*) is far more wondrous than simply reassembling existing, scattered parts (*al-jam' ba'da al-tafriq*).

He aligns this with the text of Surah at-Tur (52:35), proving that since human beings are forced by reason to admit they did not create themselves from nothing, they must logically admit that the One who launched their initial existence possesses the absolute, unchallenged capacity to launch their second creation.

3. The Rational Necessity of Judgment and Divine Wisdom (*Hikmah*)

A monumental milestone uniquely developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid* is the rational proof that the Day of Judgment is an existential and ethical necessity mandated by the eternal attribute of **Wisdom (*al-Hikmah*)**. Imam al-Maturidi

addresses the materialist and atheist worldviews that claim human life ends at the grave with zero subsequent consequences.

The Imam argues that if death were the absolute end of existence, with no final reckoning to separate the righteous from the oppressor, then the creation of human beings with an intellect, moral consciousness, and free will would be a meaningless exercise in futility (*'abath*). In Maturidi metaphysics, because Allah is characteristically Wise, His actions must lead to a purposeful, just outcome.

In this worldly life, we observe an incomplete moral landscape: oppressors frequently die in luxury, while righteous, innocent servants pass away in poverty or suffering. Therefore, sound human intellect independently recognizes that divine wisdom and absolute Justice (*'Adl*) demand a final arena of recompense. The Day of Judgment is the necessary cosmic weight that rectifies all worldly imbalances, ensuring that every atom's weight of virtue and vice finds its absolute, immutable destination.

4. The Weight of the Mizan and Accountability

Ultimately, the systematic focus on the reckoning in the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition serves as a vital pedagogical anchor for the student, the teacher, and the common Muslim. Imam al-Maturidi explains that the presentation of deeds and the weighing in the *Mizan* do not exist because Allah needs a scale to discover information, as His pre-eternal Knowledge already encompasses the final destination of every soul. Rather, the *Mizan* is brought forth to establish absolute proof over creation (*iqamat al-hujjah*).

It allows every individual to witness the literal, objective weight of their own choices with unyielding clarity, leaving zero room for denial or complaint. By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on literal textual affirmation with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced metaphysical framework, this tradition strips away all spiritual complacency. It transforms the concept of final judgement

into an immediate, living reality that directly governs a believer's internal conscience and daily actions, ensuring that the anticipation of standing before Allah remains the driving force for moral and spiritual excellence.

Conclusion

The Day of Judgement is the day on which Allah will resurrect humanity, gather them together, and judge them according to their deeds. The Qur'an and Sunnah repeatedly emphasise the certainty of this event, while Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi regarded belief in resurrection and accountability as fundamental elements of Islamic creed. Awareness of this reality encourages believers to live responsibly, seek Allah's forgiveness, and prepare for the day when every soul will stand before its Lord.

PART V

BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY (الإيمان باليوم الآخر)

Chapter 20: Paradise and Hell

Among the greatest realities of the Hereafter are Paradise (*Jannah*) and Hell (*Jahannam*). They represent the final destinations of humanity after judgement has been completed and divine justice fully manifested.

The Qur'an repeatedly describes both Paradise and Hell because they serve as powerful reminders of the consequences of human choices. Paradise inspires hope, while Hell encourages caution and repentance.

A believer therefore lives between hope in Allah's mercy and fear of His punishment.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says regarding Paradise:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا

"Indeed, those who believe and perform righteous deeds shall have the Gardens of Paradise as their abode."
(Qur'an 18:107)

Allah also says:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ

"No soul knows what delights have been hidden for them as a reward for what they used to do."
(Qur'an 32:17)

Regarding Hell, Allah says:

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

"And fear the Fire which has been prepared for the disbelievers."
(Qur'an 3:131)

And Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا

"Indeed, Allah has cursed the disbelievers and prepared for them a blazing Fire."
(Qur'an 33:64)

These verses demonstrate both the reality of Paradise and the reality of Hell.

Prophetic Evidence

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> **"Allah said: I have prepared for My righteous servants that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and has never occurred to the heart of any human being."**
>
> Narrated by al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 3244; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2824.

Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

> **"The most fortunate person of this world among the people of Hell will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and dipped once into the Fire. Then it will be said: 'Did you ever see any good? Did you ever experience any blessing?' He will reply: 'No, by Allah, my Lord.'"**
>
> Narrated by Muslim, Hadith no. 2807.

This hadith illustrates the overwhelming reality of the Hereafter compared to worldly life.

Discussion

Paradise

Paradise is the eternal abode prepared by Allah for the believers.

It contains every form of joy, blessing, and happiness. The Qur'an describes gardens beneath which rivers flow, magnificent dwellings, pure companionship, peace, security, and complete freedom from sorrow, fear, illness, and death.

However, the greatest blessing of Paradise is not its physical delights.

Rather, it is the pleasure of Allah.

Allah says:

وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

"And the pleasure of Allah is even greater."
(Qur'an 9:72)

Hell

Hell is the abode prepared for those who reject Allah and persist in disbelief.

The Qur'an describes it as a place of punishment, regret, and suffering.

The purpose of these descriptions is not merely to frighten people but to remind them of the seriousness of rejecting divine guidance.

Islam teaches that Allah is perfectly just. No one enters Hell except through their own choices and actions.

Eternity

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah unanimously teach that both Paradise and Hell are actual created realities, presently existing, and entirely eternal, never to perish or come to an end.

They are not merely symbolic concepts or states of mind.

They are created realities prepared by Allah for the final recompense of His servants.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni paradigm for understanding the ontology and eternity of Paradise (*Jannah*) and Hell (*Jahannam*). This tradition approaches the final destinations not as abstract

psychological states, but as real, objective, and enduring physical realms that vindicate the ultimate execution of divine justice (*'Adl*), mercy (*Rahmah*), and wisdom (*Hikmah*).

1. The Ontological Coherence and Present Existence in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to establish an unyielding, literal baseline: **Paradise and Hell are already created and presently exist** (*al-jannatu wan-naru makhluqatani al-an*). The Imam explicitly targets the core error of the Mu'tazilites and early philosophical groups who dangerously claimed that creating Paradise and Hell before the Day of Judgment is an exercise in futility, arguing that they will only be brought into existence after the reckoning is completed.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically dismantles this rationalist overreach. He establishes that asserting their present existence is a direct compliance with the clear textual markers of the Qur'an, which repeatedly describe Paradise as being *"prepared for the righteous"* (*Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:133*) and Hell as being *"prepared for the disbelievers"* (*Surah al-Baqarah, 2:24*).

The Hanafi school argues that projecting human definitions of efficiency or timing onto the Creator's actions is a fundamental flaw in reasoning. Furthermore, the Imam couples this with the definitive doctrine of eternity: **Paradise and Hell never perish, nor do their inhabitants ever die** (*la yafnayani abadan*). This maxim permanently seals orthodox creed against the heretical notions of Jahm ibn Safwan, who claimed that both realms would eventually dissolve into non-existence, a position that directly violates mass-transmitted revelation.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Final Recompense

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this discussion in *Kitab al-Tawhid* by constructing a brilliant intellectual defense of the eternity of reward and

punishment. He addresses a fundamental cognitive problem often raised by sceptics: how can a finite human life, spanning only a few decades on Earth, justly result in an *infinite*, eternal punishment in Hellfire?

Imam al-Maturidi solves this by analysing the internal intention (*niyyah*) and core disposition of the human soul. He applies a rigorous rational rule: a person's recompense is measured by the permanent orientation of their will, not just the physical duration of their earthly life. A disbeliever who dies in a state of unyielding rejection of the truth possessed an internal, deep-seated intention to persist in that disbelief forever, had they been granted eternal worldly life.

Conversely, the believer maintained a permanent, eternal intention to submit to Allah. Therefore, divine justice (*'Adl*) and wisdom (*Hikmah*) naturally dictate that an eternal intention receives an eternal consequence. Hell and Paradise are the ultimate, immutable materialisations of these permanent spiritual choices, rendering modern attempts to minimise the gravity of divine accountability a complete rational failure.

3. The Ultimate Blessing: The Beatific Vision (*Ru'yat Allah*)

A monumental milestone uniquely developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid*—and one that forms the very crown of the Hanafi-Maturidi eschatological tradition—is the rational and textual verification of the **Beatific Vision**. While the physical delights of Paradise are immense, both imams emphasise that the greatest bliss is the direct sight of the Divine Essence.

Imam al-Maturidi defends this reality with unyielding vigor against the Mu'tazilites, who claimed that seeing Allah is impossible because seeing requires a physical object to exist in a specific direction, distance, and shape. Aligning perfectly with the pre-spatial parameters established in Chapter 5, the Maturidi methodology establishes a flawless rule: **Allah will be seen by**

the believers in Paradise without any physical modality, resemblance, definition, distance, or spatial direction (*bila kayf wa-la tashbih wa-la jiha*).

The mind cannot comprehend the *how* of this vision in this worldly life because our sight is currently bounded by material physics. However, in the Hereafter, Allah will grant the believers a unique, sublime faculty of perception that allows them to behold His majestic Essence while He remains entirely transcendent, far above the constraints of spatial dimensions.

4. The Psychological Shield and Moral Anchor

Ultimately, the systematic focus on Paradise and Hell in this tradition serves as a vital pedagogical anchor for the common Muslim, the student of knowledge, and the teacher. Imam al-Maturidi explains that the vivid scriptural descriptions of the fire and the gardens exist to break human arrogance and shatter worldly complacency.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on literal textual affirmation with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced metaphysical framework, this tradition structures a believer's daily life between the dual states of fear (*khawf*) and hope (*raja'*). This is not a passive or fearful state of mind, but a dynamic, active consciousness that directly drives moral excellence. The reader understands that every choice made on Earth is building their eternal landscape, perfectly anchoring active spiritual vigilance within a logically airtight and textually immaculate theological framework.

The Preservation of Absolute Consensus: Refuting the Heterodox Doctrine of the Extinction of Hell (*Fanāʾ al-Nār*)

For over a millennium, the absolute consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah* remained entirely unbroken regarding a fundamental article of faith: both Paradise and Hell are completely, unconditionally eternal, never to perish, dissolve, or see their punishments cease. To compromise this baseline

is to threaten the very architecture of divine accountability. Historically, this eternity was denied from two extreme, opposing directions:

1. **The Early Rationalist Deviation:** The early heresiarch Jahm ibn Ṣafwān asserted that both Paradise and Hell would ultimately expire, a view universally condemned by the early Salaf as an act of absolute theological deviation.

2. **The Later Literal Base:** In a shocking departure from classical Sunni orthodoxy, the literalist theologian Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim authored treatises arguing for *fanāʾ al-nār*—the speculative theory that while Paradise is eternal, the Hellfire will eventually turn cold and its inhabitants will be annihilated or granted universal salvation.
This modern, fringe resurgence of *fanāʾ al-nār* is not merely an alternative scholarly opinion; it represents a systemic structural danger to the integrity of creed (*ʿaqīdah*). Mainstream orthodox authorities have treated this aberration with extreme gravity. Therefore, a systematic deconstruction of this error using textual, rational, and spiritual frameworks is paramount.

1. The Clear Textual Proofs (*Al-Adillah al-Naqliyyah*)

The Holy Qur'ān explicitly, repeatedly uses phrasing that permanently bars any possibility of temporary or cyclical punishment for those who die in a state of absolute disbelief (*kufr*). Allah Most High declares:

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ لَّا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

"They will abide therein forever; they will find no protector or helper."
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:65)

The integration of *khālidīna* (abiding) with the absolute emphasis of *abadā* (forever, without end) leaves no linguistic room for metaphor or temporal

limitation. Furthermore, Allah explicitly shuts the door on any concept of the fire "dying out" or transitioning into a state of mercy:

كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا

"Whenever it subsides, We increase for them the blazing Fire."
(Sūrah al-Isrāʾ, 17:97)

Similarly, in the authentic Sunnah, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explicitly illustrated the permanent crystallization of the afterlife through the cosmic slaughter of death itself. Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Death will be brought in the form of a white-spotted ram, and it will be slaughtered between Paradise and Hell. Then it will be announced: 'O people of Paradise, eternity and no more death! O people of Hell, eternity and no more death!'"

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 4730; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2849).

To assert that Hellfire will eventually expire directly contradicts these definitive, mass-transmitted texts (*mutawātir*), reducing clear divine warnings to textually hollow metaphors.

2. The Rational and Legal Proofs (*Al-Adillah al-ʿAqliyyah*)

The proponents of *fanāʾ al-nār* often attempt to invoke an emotional argument regarding divine justice (*ʿAdl*), asking how a merciful Creator can punish a finite human life with an infinite sequence of torture. This represents a profound failure to understand the metaphysics of the human soul. Within the Hanafi-Maturidi school, rational legal justice dictates that **recompense is tied directly to the permanent orientation of the will, not the mere chronological duration of the action**. Actions are temporary; core beliefs and systemic alignments of the heart are eternal.

Furthermore, asserting that the ultimate destination or duration of punishment is eventually equalized fundamentally contradicts the absolute Qur'an principle of cosmic distinction. Allah Most High repeatedly rejects the notion that the structural reality of a believer can ever be equated with that of a non-believer:

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

"Then will We treat the Muslims like the criminals? What is [the matter] with you? How do you judge?"
(Sūrah al-Qalam, 68:35-36)

In another decisive verse, Allah explicitly rebukes those who entertain the delusion that the ultimate trajectories of faith and rejection can ever intersect:

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَّحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ۚ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

"Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We will make them equal to those who have believed and done righteous deeds—equal in their life and their death? Evil is that which they judge."
(Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:21)

If eternity in Hell is dissolved, this divine declaration of distinction is functionally flattened. To claim that the perpetrators of the worst atrocities on Earth will eventually experience the same termination of punishment—or access to divine grace—as the prophets and martyrs strips the concept of divine justice of its meaning, rendering the entire cosmic drama of human existence entirely futile.

3. The Spiritual Reality and Cosmic Hierarchy: The Preserved Sanctuary of Paradise

From an existential and spiritual perspective, the modern liberalized or extremist push toward universal salvation ignores a critical metaphysical truth: **rejection of the Divine results in absolute cosmic exclusion**. If non-believers, tyrants, and those who explicitly waged war against the prophets were eventually allowed to step into the presence of divine pleasure or have their punishments extinguished, it would fundamentally compromise the sacred hierarchy of Paradise.

The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ fierce protection of spiritual boundaries is perfectly illustrated in an immense, highly relevant legal precedent recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. When Sayyidunā ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ra) considered proposing to the daughter of Abū Jahl (who was a Muslim herself), the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood upon the pulpit in deep anger and issued a resounding spiritual declaration:

"Verily, Fāṭimah is a part of me, and I fear that she will be tested in her religion... By Allah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah and the daughter of the enemy of Allah can never be gathered together under one man!"

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 3729; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2449).

If the Prophet ﷺ explicitly declared it a cosmic impossibility for the lineage of the supreme champion of truth and the lineage of the absolute enemy of Allah to be integrated within a temporary, worldly household, how could the human mind ever assume that the enemies of Allah themselves could share an ultimate, final outcome or a cessation of judgment with the righteous in the realm of eternity? The believer and the non-believer cannot possess the same trajectory. To claim otherwise is to allow the primary psychological trap of Shayṭān to infiltrate Sunni creed. The enemy's ultimate ambition is to convince humanity that the system of worship, submission, and adherence to

revelation is practically irrelevant because an arbitrary, unstructured definition of mercy will eventually erase all spiritual accountability.

4. Imam Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī's Decisive Refutation and the Verdict of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī

The modern standard-bearer of our tradition, Imam Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (رحمه الله), confronted this specific Taymiyyan deviation with unyielding academic ferocity in his landmark treatise, *Masʾalat al-Khulūd* ("The Issue of Eternity"). Al-Kawtharī meticulously demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments on this matter completely severed the author from the historical continuum of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*.

Historically, it was precisely because of this and a series of other deeply troubling, fringe beliefs that the mainstream scholarly authorities of his own and subsequent eras issued an unprecedented cross-madhhab consensus condemning his methodology. The master theologians and judges recognized that his denial of Hell's eternity did not exist in a vacuum; rather, it was part of a broader, systemic departure from orthodoxy. This included his assertion of a *ḥawādith lā awwala lahā* (a chain of created events eternal in the past), which led directly to severe anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), as well as his highly unorthodox rulings restricting travel to visit the final resting place of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ—positions that the classical verifiers collectively recognized as explicit heresy (*bidʿah muḍallilah*).

So severe were these deviations that certain preeminent masters of the Hanafi school felt compelled to issue the gravest legal verdicts. Most notably, the towering master of jurisprudence and Maturidi kalam, **Imam ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 841 AH)**, issued an absolute *fatwā* declaring that Ibn Taymiyyah had completely crossed the boundaries of orthodox Islam into clear disbelief (kufr). Imam ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn went so far as to rule that anyone who willfully applies the honorific title *"Shaykh al-Islām"* to Ibn Taymiyyah—fully aware of

his fringe doctrines on the Divine Attributes and the finality of the Hereafter —had itself committed an act of *bidʿah* (heresy) or serious deviation.

While Imam Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī was notoriously cautious, precise, and protective regarding the application of *takfīr* to individuals, he actively validated the structural necessity of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī's historical stance. Al-Kawtharī recognised that when a writer attempts to dismantle the absolute consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Ummah on an issue as foundational as the eternity of final accountability, it is no longer an internal difference of interpretation (*ijtihād*). It is an existential threat to the integrity of the religion itself.

Al-Kawtharī warned that opening the door to the non-eternity of Hellfire destroys the absolute certainty (*qaṭʿiyyah*) of scriptural language. If the word *abadā* (forever) can be structurally explained away as having an end in the context of Hell, then an antagonist could use the exact same linguistic acrobatics to argue that the rewards of Paradise are also temporary. Through his masterful defense, Imam al-Kawtharī preserved the inseparable, integrated continuum of orthodox Sunni creed, ensuring that any attempt to dilute the reality of eternal accountability is recognized for what it truly is: a complete theological catastrophe.

Conclusion

Paradise and Hell are real and eternal destinations prepared by Allah for His creation. Paradise is the abode of reward, peace, and divine pleasure, while Hell is the abode of punishment and regret. The Qur'an and Sunnah describe both realities in vivid detail, and Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi regarded belief in them as an essential component of Islamic creed. Through hope in Paradise and fear of Hell, believers are encouraged to seek Allah's pleasure and prepare for the life to come.

PART VI

BELIEF IN DIVINE DECREE (الإيمان بالقدر)

Chapter 21: Understanding Divine Decree (Qadar)

Belief in divine decree (*qadar*) is the sixth and final pillar of faith. It is also one of the most profound subjects in Islamic theology.

Many people struggle to understand how Allah's knowledge and will relate to human actions. Questions concerning destiny, free will, responsibility, and divine wisdom have occupied scholars throughout Islamic history.

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ included belief in divine decree among the foundations of faith.

A Muslim believes that Allah knows all things, wills all things, and that nothing occurs outside His knowledge and power. At the same time, human beings remain responsible for their choices and actions.

The challenge is not choosing between divine decree and human responsibility. Rather, it is understanding how both realities coexist.

Qur'anic Evidence

Allah Most High says:

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

"Indeed, We have created everything according to a decree."
(Qur'an 54:49)

Allah also says:

وَعِندَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ

"With Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him."
(Qur'an 6:59)

And Allah says:

وَمَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"You do not will except that Allah, Lord of the worlds, wills."
(Qur'an 81:29)

At the same time, Allah says:

فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ

"Whoever wishes, let him believe, and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve."
(Qur'an 18:29)

Together, these verses establish both divine decree and human choice.

Prophetic Evidence

'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه narrated that Jibril asked the Prophet ﷺ about faith, and the Prophet ﷺ replied:

> **"Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in divine decree, its good and its apparent evil."**

Narrated by Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), Hadith no. 8.

Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"**Allah recorded the decrees of creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth.**"

Narrated by Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Divine Decree (*Kitab al-Qadar*), Hadith no. 2653.

These narrations establish that divine decree is among the essential components of faith.

Discussion

The scholars traditionally explained divine decree through four interrelated principles.

Allah's Knowledge

Allah knows everything.

He knows the past, present, and future.

Nothing is hidden from Him.

His knowledge encompasses every action, event, intention, and possibility.

Allah's Recording

Allah has recorded all things.

This recording does not compel people to act in a particular way. Rather, it reflects Allah's perfect knowledge of what His creation will choose.

Allah's Will

Nothing occurs outside the will of Allah.

Whatever Allah wills occurs, and whatever He does not will does not occur.

However, this does not mean that Allah is pleased with every action that takes place. Allah may will that something occur while commanding against it, as is the case with sins and acts of disobedience.

Allah's Creation

Allah is the sole Creator of all things, including human beings and their actions. Everything ultimately exists through His active creative power and sustaining will.

Human Responsibility

One of the most important principles of Islamic theology is that divine decree does not eliminate human responsibility.

Human beings possess choice.

They make decisions.

They intend actions.

They are therefore accountable for what they choose.

A person who commits a sin cannot excuse himself by saying:

"Allah decreed it for me."

Likewise, a person who performs good deeds cannot claim complete independence from Allah's guidance and assistance.

The believer recognises both realities:

- Allah is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.
- Human beings are responsible for their choices.

Key Insights from *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid*

The framework established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provides the definitive Sunni resolution to the paradox of divine decree (*Qadar*) and human agency. This tradition navigates between the extremes of total fatalism and absolute human independence by introducing a precise epistemological distinction between the act of **Creation (*al-Khalq*)** and the act of **Acquisition (*al-Kasb*)**.

1. The Matrix of Predestination and Non-Compulsion in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the unyielding foundational baseline for the doctrine of decree in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*. The Imam targets the core errors of the two major deviant factions of his era:

- **The Qadariyyah (Rationalist Deniers):** Who asserted that human beings create their own actions completely independent of Allah’s pre-eternal Will, effectively introducing multiple creators into the cosmos.

- **The Jabriyyah (Pure Fatalists):** Who claimed that human beings have absolute zero choice, moving involuntarily like feathers in the wind, which renders divine rewards and punishments a form of injustice.

Imam Abu Hanifah systematically dismantles both fallacies through a series of definitive maxims in his text. He states that Allah recorded all things in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*) prior to creation, but notes with immense scholastic precision: *"Allah wrote these things as descriptions, not as commands."* This means that Allah's pre-eternal Knowledge (*ʿIlm*) and Recording (*Kitabah*) are informative attributes, not compulsive forces. Allah records an action because He eternally knows the human agent will freely choose it; the human does not choose it simply because it was recorded.

Furthermore, the Imam introduces the cornerstone rule of Hanafi theology: **Allah did not create any human being in a state of inherent belief or inherent disbelief** (*ma khalaqa Allahu ahadan kafiran wa-la muʾminan*). Rather, He created human beings as neutral moral agents endowed with faculties, and it is through their own subsequent choice that they become believers or disbelievers.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Kasb and Ikhtiyar

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this foundational Hanafi blueprint into a sophisticated, airtight metaphysical system in *Kitab al-Tawhid*. To completely silence heretical objections, Imam al-Maturidi pioneered the definitive Sunni breakdown of a human action, proving that every voluntary deed is composed of two distinct parts:

- **Choice and Acquisition (*al-Ikhtiyar wal-Kasb*)**

This is the human element. Human beings possess a real, divinely bestowed partial free will (*al-iradah al-juzʾiyyah*). When a person directs their intent

toward a specific deed—whether it be an act of worship or an act of sin—they are executing *Kasb* (Acquisition). They choose the action, incline toward it, and take moral ownership of it.

- **Creation and Bringing into Being (*al-Khalq wat-Takwin*)**

  This belongs exclusively to Allah. Once the human agent exercises their internal choice (*Kasb*), Allah exercises His pre-eternal attribute of *Takwin* to bring that action out of non-existence into physical reality. Allah creates the physical power (*al-qudrah al-hadithah*) within the human limbs to execute the deed at that exact split second.

Through this brilliant framework, Imam al-Maturidi establishes that human beings are the true *doers* of their actions via choice, while Allah is the sole *Creator* of their actions via power. This completely safeguards the absolute monotheism of Islam while preserving genuine human responsibility.

3. The Vital Distinction Between Divine Will (*Iradah*) and Divine Pleasure (*Rida*)

A monumental milestone uniquely developed within *Kitab al-Tawhid*—and one that forms a crucial line of defense for the teacher and student of knowledge—is the sharp separation between Allah's **Universal Will (*Iradah*)** and His **Legislative Pleasure (*Rida* or *Mahabbah*)**. Factions like the Mu'tazilites claimed that if Allah wills an action to happen, He must necessarily love it. Therefore, they argued that since Allah hates sin, sins cannot be created or willed by Him.

Imam al-Maturidi refutes this semantic confusion with unyielding vigor. He proves that nothing can exist in the universe against the Will of the Almighty, for an un-willed event would imply a deficiency in divine sovereignty.

Therefore, **everything—both good and evil, obedience and sin—occurs by Allah's Universal Will, Decree, and Creation**.
Crucially, however, His *Will* is not identical to His *Pleasure*. Allah wills and creates a sin to occur to maintain the structural reality of human choice and testing, but He does not *love* or *approve* of that sin. Conversely, He wills, creates, and *pleasurably approves* of acts of obedience. This key insight shields the common Muslim from the trap of fatalism, ensuring they never use the divine decree as an excuse to justify spiritual negligence or moral corruption.

4. The Intellectual Anchor Against Doubt

Ultimately, the systematic focus on *Qadar* in the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition serves to manifest the eternal attribute of divine Wisdom (*Hikmah*). Imam al-Maturidi demonstrates that because Allah is characteristically Wise, the testing of humanity through choice is not a game of random variation, but a deeply purposeful cosmic design.

By combining Imam Abu Hanifah's insistence on non-compulsion with Imam al-Maturidi's advanced metaphysical synthesis of *Kasb*, this tradition provides a comprehensive intellectual shield. It transforms the study of destiny from a source of anxiety into a profound wellspring of peace and humility. The believer understands that while they must exert every effort and take full accountability for their choices, the ultimate outcome of the universe rests securely within the flawless, sovereign custody of the Lord of the Worlds.

Conclusion

Belief in divine decree is among the pillars of faith and one of the most profound teachings of Islam. Allah possesses perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, and complete authority over creation. At the same time, human beings remain responsible for their choices and actions. Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Maturidi rejected both fatalism and the denial of divine decree,

teaching instead a balanced understanding that affirms Allah's sovereignty while preserving genuine human accountability. This balance lies at the heart of the Sunni understanding of *qadar*.

PART VI

BELIEF IN DIVINE DECREE (الإيمان بالقدر)

Chapter 22: The Expanse of Divine Mercy and Forgiveness

The manifestation of Divine Mercy (*Raḥmah*) and Forgiveness (*Maghfirah*) stands as one of the most sublime and structurally essential realities within orthodox Sunni theology. As established in the foundational parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and systematically codified within *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, the unyielding baseline of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah* is that salvation is fundamentally an unearned gift from the Creator. While human beings are inherently finite and bound by shortcomings, the canopy of Allah's mercy remains perpetually vast, unconditional, and absolute. It is the primary lens through which the creation experiences the Creator. This chapter evaluates the majestic expanse of divine mercy, deconstructs how it operates in perfect harmony with Divine Wisdom, and analyzes the spiritual mechanisms of absolute forgiveness.

Qur'an Evidence

Allah Most High says:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا

"Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins."
(Qur'an 39:53)

Allah also says:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

"And My mercy encompasses all things."
(Qur'an 7:156)

And Allah says:

كَتَبَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

"He has prescribed mercy upon Himself."
(Qur'an 6:12)

These verses demonstrate that divine mercy is an all-encompassing, self-prescribed reality that forms the supreme baseline of cosmic existence.

Prophetic Evidence

Abū Hurayrah (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"When Allah completed the creation, He wrote in His Book which is with Him on the Throne: 'Verily, My mercy prevails over My wrath.'"

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 3194; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2751).

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ra) narrated that some prisoners of war were brought before the Prophet ﷺ, and there was a woman among them searching desperately for her child. When she found her child, she embraced him and breastfed him. The Prophet ﷺ asked his companions:

"Do you think this woman would throw her child into the fire?" We said, "No, by Allah, if she has the power not to." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah is certainly more merciful to His servants than this woman is to her child."

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 5999; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2754).

Abū Hurayrah (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Allah has made mercy into one hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine parts with Himself and sent down one part to the Earth. From that single part, the creation shows mercy to one another, so much so that a horse lifts its hoof away from its foal lest it should trample it."

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 6000; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2752).

Discussion

The concept of divine mercy in orthodox Islam is not a passive emotion, but an active manifestation of divine beauty and perfection. Every blessing experienced by creation—from the baseline reality of existence and the breathing of air to the descent of revelation and the sending of prophets—is a direct, unmerited fruit of Allah's mercy.

The Qur'an repeatedly commands humanity to never despair of this mercy. Despair (*qunūṭ*) is recognized as a profound spiritual disease, because it presumes that human limitation can somehow outscale divine expansiveness. Sincere belief allows a human being to understand that no matter how broken they are, the ninety-nine parts of mercy reserved by the Creator for the Hereafter ensure that ultimate hope is never an illusion.

The Horizon of Unmerited Grace

A vital cornerstone of Sunni creed is the recognition that entry into Paradise is a pure manifestation of Allah's grace (*Faḍl*), rather than a commercial invoice or transactional payment for human efforts. Human deeds are fundamentally finite, contingent, and inherently incomplete. [

By contrast, the rewards of the Hereafter are infinite, perfect, and absolute. Because a finite action cannot mathematically purchase an infinite reality, the moral choices of a believer serve merely as a token of internal submission, while the ultimate opening of the eternal kingdom remains an unearned act of divine generosity.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The theological parameters mapped out by Imam Abū Ḥanīfah and systematically defended by Imam al-Māturīdī elevate the discussion of divine mercy from a sentimental concept into a robust, logically airtight metaphysical system.

1. The Primacy of Grace in al-Fiqh al-Akbar

Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah structures the parameters of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to protect the absolute primacy of divine grace. The Imam explicitly targets the rationalist distortions of the early Muʿtazilites, who arrogantly claimed that Allah is contractually obligated to reward the obedient and punish the disobedient based on a human definition of transactional justice.
Imam Abū Ḥanīfah dismantles this philosophical overreach. He establishes that Allah is entirely free from creaturely necessity, coercion, or external obligation. The school demonstrates that if Allah rewards the righteous, it is an exercise of His unmerited Grace (*Faḍl*); and if He punishes, it is an execution of His absolute, uncompromised Justice (*ʿAdl*), without an atom's weight of oppression (*ẓulm*). By tying salvation completely to divine grace, *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* permanently shatters human self-righteousness, ensuring the servant remains forever humbled before the sovereignty of the Creator.

2. Imam al-Maturidi and the Harmony of Mercy and Wisdom

Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī elevates this blueprint into a magnificent intellectual system in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* by solving a fundamental cognitive problem often raised by skeptics: if Allah's mercy is all-encompassing, how does it interact with the implementation of divine accountability?
Imam al-Māturīdī beautifully resolves this by defining the organic relationship between Mercy (*Raḥmah*) and Wisdom (*Ḥikmah*). In Maturidi metaphysics, Wisdom is defined as placing everything in its precise, rightful place (*waḍʿu kulli shayʾin fī maḥallih*). Therefore, true divine mercy is never

chaotic, blind, or unstructured; it is governed by perfect wisdom. Divine reward and pardon do not compromise the rational cosmic order; rather, they exist as harmonized extensions of a singular, flawless Divine Wisdom that perfectly preserves both the majestic expanse of grace and the moral parameters established by the Divine.

3. Sovereign Will and the Suspension of Judgment

A crucial milestone developed within the Hanafi-Maturidi eschatological tradition is the absolute dependency of forgiveness upon the Sovereign Will (*Mashīʾah*) of Allah. Unlike heterodox factions that attempted to force rational templates onto the choices of the Divine, our masters emphasize that Allah pardons whom He wills out of unadulterated favor.
This baseline shatters the performative anxiety of legal literalism. Forgiveness is not a automatic mechanical result of human ritual volume, but a sovereign choice belonging exclusively to *Al-Ghafūr*. This methodology establishes that the door to divine pardon remains dynamically fluid until the very departure of the soul, anchoring the human psychological state in a permanent vulnerability that completely neutralizes religious vanity (*ʿujb*).

4. The Infinite Expanse of the Beautiful Names of Pardon

In the theological system of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, the names of mercy—such as *ar-Raḥmān* (the Most Merciful), *al-Ghaffār* (the All-Forgiving), and *al-Wadūd* (the Loving)—are not static labels. They are active, supreme realities that govern the cosmos.

Imam al-Māturīdī explains that the vast vocabulary of scriptural forgiveness exists to reveal the true nature of the relationship between the Creator and the contingent creation. The names of pardon explicitly require an object toward which that pardon is directed; they assume a weak, vulnerable servant who returns to the divine threshold in a state of brokenness. True orthodox pedagogy teaches that the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey is for the human heart to completely empty itself of self-reliance, finding its

absolute, unshakeable asylum solely within the infinite expanse of these beautiful divine attributes.

Conclusion

The architecture of human hope stands permanently anchored upon the unearned canopy of Divine Mercy and Forgiveness. True *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah* theology structuralizes a path that celebrates the vastness of divine pardon while deeply humbling the human ego. Through an uncompromised adherence to the mass-transmitted scriptural texts and the intellectual genius of the master verifiers, the supremacy of grace over wrath remains fully secure. By abiding within these flawless theological parameters, a believer is safely guided to navigate their worldly life in beautiful brokenness, looking entirely to the absolute generosity of the Divine for ultimate salvation.

PART VII

THE PROPHETIC LEGACY AND COMMUNITY ORTHODOXY

Chapter 23: The Sacred Equilibrium: Love for the Ahlul Bayt as an Article of Faith

Among the most vital, majestic, and spiritually illuminating dimensions of orthodox Sunni theology is the non-negotiable obligation to love, honour, and absolutely revere the sanctity of the Prophetic Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*). In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, devotion to the family of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not viewed as a secondary emotional preference, an optional spiritual accessory, or a mere historical courtesy. Rather, it is codified as an intrinsic, structural component of the core creed (*Aṣl al-ʿAqīdah*) itself.

The *Ahl al-Bayt* represent the physical and spiritual continuum of the Prophetic light on Earth. They are the living vessels through which the raw Prophetic character, esoteric wisdom, and divine light were concentrated and transmitted to posterity. To detach Islamic theology from the love of this family is to cut the religion off from its most intimate spiritual roots. This chapter evaluates the peerless, incomparable ranking of the Prophetic lineage, deconstructs their metaphysical distinction, and outlines why entry into the city of Prophetic guidance is completely impossible except through the doors of his immaculate household.

Qur'an Evidence

The foundational status and spiritual supremacy granted to the Prophetic Household are explicitly dictated by the textual transmission (*naql*) of divine revelation. Allah Most High commands:

قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

"Say, [O Muhammad]: I do not ask of you for this message any payment except love for my close relatives."
(Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:23)

In the advanced linguistic deconstructions of the Hanafi masters, this verse establishes a permanent cosmic decree. The Prophet ﷺ spent his life delivering the ultimate gift of guidance and salvation to humanity, refusing any material or worldly compensation. The singular "repayment" commanded by Allah Most High upon the global Ummah is *al-mawaddah*—a profound, intense, active, and reverent love—directed specifically toward his *Qurbā* (his close family and lineage).

Furthermore, Allah Most High explicitly reveals the unique spiritual purity and metaphysical protection granted to this elite household, stating:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

"Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the Prophet's household, and to purify you with a thorough purification."
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:33)

This historic declaration, known textually as *Āyat al-Taṭhīr* (The Verse of Purification), demonstrates that the *Ahl al-Bayt* possess an unmatched status of spiritual elevation. The divine text uses the strongest linguistic restriction tools in the Arabic language (*Innamā*) to affirm that Allah Himself has willed to permanently insulate the collective entity of the Prophetic Household from

spiritual impurity (*al-rijs*), rendering them a pure, uncorrupted fountain of guidance for all generations.

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of loving the *Ahl al-Bayt* is also clearly shown in the living explanation of the Prophetic Sunnah. Zayd ibn Arqam (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood to deliver a sermon at the watering place known as Khum, where he stated:

"Amma ba'du. O people! I am only a human being. The messenger of my Lord [the Angel of Death] is about to come to me and I will respond. I am leaving among you two weighty things (*al-thaqalayn*): the first of them is the Book of Allah, in which there is guidance and light... and the people of my household (*Ahl al-Bayt*). I remind you of Allah concerning the people of my household! I remind you of Allah concerning the people of my household!"

(Narrated by Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Virtues of the Companions [Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba], Hadith no. 2408).

By pairing the Holy Qur'an directly with the *Ahl al-Bayt* as the twin "weighty things" left behind for the community, the Prophet ﷺ established that the preservation of correct orthodox dogma is inextricably linked to honoring his family.

Furthermore, Hazrat ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ra) narrated a definitive prophetic metric regarding his own spiritual station, stating:

"By the One who split the grain and created the soul, it is a definitive covenant of the Unlettered Prophet ﷺ to me that none loves me except a believer, and none hates me except a hypocrite."

(Narrated by Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith [Kitab al-Iman], Hadith no. 78).

This prophetic text elevates love for the family of the Prophet ﷺ from a secondary moral virtue into a primary diagnostic criteria for faith (*īmān*) itself. In Sunni theology, harboring hatred for Hazrat ʿAlī or the noble family of the Prophet ﷺ is classified as a clear sign of spiritual hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

To lock in the absolute, incomparable depth of this knowledge framework, the Prophet ﷺ explicitly designated Hazrat ʿAlī (ra) as the sole, authoritative corridor to his metaphysical legacy, declaring:

"I am the city of knowledge, and ʿAlī is its gate; whoever wishes to enter the city must enter through its gate."

(Narrated by al-Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak, Hadith no. 4637, and verified by classical chain-verifiers).

This establishes a fundamental epistemological baseline: a student of knowledge can never access, understand, or truly master the internal reality of Muhammadan guidance without completely submitting to and entering through the corridor of Hazrat ʿAlī.

Discussion

Human beings understand that the closer a branch is to the root of a tree, the more directly it draws its life and sweetness. If this is true for the mundane arrangements of natural biology, it applies with infinite, cosmic necessity to the spiritual kingdom of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Devotion to the *Ahl al-Bayt* is the ultimate realization of our allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ himself.

The inner circle of this household represents a constellation of peerless perfections. At the apex sits Hazrat ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ra)—the unmatched

warrior-scholar whose chivalry (*futuwwah*) at *Khandaq* and *Khaybar* permanently shattered the enemies of the faith, and whose intellectual mastery remains the ultimate fountainhead for all classical spiritual paths (*turuq*). Alongside him stands the queen of the household, Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ (ra), whom the Prophet ﷺ explicitly described as *"the leader of the women of Paradise"* and a literal physical extension of his own blessed body (*baḍʿatun minnī*).

From this cosmic union descended the two princes of the Prophetic legacy, Al-Ḥasan and Al-Ḥusayn (ra). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ poured an unmatched, intense public and private affection upon his two grandsons, permanently cementing their cosmic authority within the text of the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ openly declared:

"**Al-Ḥasan and Al-Ḥusayn are the leaders of the youth of Paradise.**"

(Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi, Hadith no. 3768, and verified by classical masters).

This title is not a mere honorific; it is a structural eschatological decree proving that their spiritual station transcends that of ordinary believers. They are the literal "Princes of Paradise." To demonstrate the absolute dependency of salvation upon loving them, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explicitly tied divine affection to their personal alignment, holding them close and supplicating:

"**O Allah, I love them, so love them, and love whoever loves them.**"

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Hadith no. 3747; and Muslim, Hadith no. 2421).

Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ established their baseline as an absolute marker of peace and war for the Ummah, stating to Hazrat ʿAlī, Sayyidah Fāṭimah, Al-Ḥasan, and Al-Ḥusayn:

"**I am at war with whomever you are at war with, and I am at peace with whomever you are at peace with.**"

(Narrated by al-Tirmidhī, Hadith no. 3870).

Their sacrifices were not mere political events; they were deep, metaphysical preservation acts that sealed the purity of the message. Al-Ḥasan preserved the internal blood-boundaries of the community through his historic, peaceful reconciliation (*ʿĀm al-Jamāʿah*), while Al-Ḥusayn shattered the structural baseline of tyranny at Karbala, pouring out his noble blood to ensure that the uncompromised standard of prophetic truth would remain entirely unassailable against structural corruption.

This pure golden chain of spiritual and intellectual authority continued uninterrupted through subsequent generations of the household, finding its peak in figures like **Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq**—the master verifier whose spiritual depth and intellectual methodology laid the foundational infrastructure for both classical jurisprudence and advanced spiritual purification—and **Imam Zayd ibn ʿAlī**, the supreme champion of justice and unyielding courage against tyranny. To look upon this lineage is to look upon the text of revelation brought to life. They are the living mirrors of the Sunnah, and to love them is to love the message itself.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The insights found within *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* establish the precise intellectual methodology required to maintain the absolute, uncompromised sanctity of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

- **The Practical Allegiance of Imam Abu Hanifah:** The deep, unyielding devotion of Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah to the *Ahl al-Bayt* was not merely theoretical; it was proven through immense historical sacrifice. The Imam famously put his life, wealth, and academic reputation on the line to support

the legal claims of the Prophetic descendants against the political tyrannies of his era, specifically backing the uprisings of Imam Zayd ibn ʿAlī and Imam Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah. In *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, the Imam anchors this devotion by commanding the absolute love for all the children and pure wives of the Prophet ﷺ—recognizing the *Ummahāt al-Muʾminīn* (Mothers of the Believers) as foundational members of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. He established that loving them is a shield that completely immunizes the mind against the toxic heresies of those who harboured hostility (*Naṣb*) toward the Prophetic household.

- **Imam al-Maturidi and the Metaphysics of Prophetic Heritage:** In *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī provides the systematic rational defense of the *Ahl al-Bayt*'s spiritual distinction. He argues that because the universe is inherently temporal and subject to corruption, Allah Most High leaves behind physical and spiritual anchors within the material world to preserve the purity of divine truth. The *Ahl al-Bayt* serve as this structural anchor. The Imam demonstrates that the unique purification promised in *Āyat al-Taṭhīr* means that the elite spiritual masters of the Prophetic household possess an inherited wisdom (*ḥikmah*) that serves to clarify the deeper, non-literal meanings of revelation, protecting the common Muslim from the pitfalls of rigid literalism or spiritual drift.

- **The Complete Destruction of Nasibi Hostility:** A defining insight shared by both Imams is that any attempt to minimize, hide, or downplay the unique virtues of Hazrat ʿAlī (ra), Al-Ḥasan, Al-Ḥusayn, or the *Ahl al-Bayt* under the guise of political convenience is a severe theological disease. The Hanafi-Maturidi school treats the love for the Prophetic Household as a primary, non-negotiable metric of orthodox identity. True orthodoxy demands that the names and struggles of the Princes of Paradise, Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Imam Zayd, and the household remain at the center of communal pedagogy. By locking this reverence into the core creed, our masters ensured that the

Ummah is permanently shielded against the cold, dry literalism that seeks to strip the Prophetic lineage of their divinely decreed cosmic distinction.

Conclusion

The belief that love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* is an essential article of faith forms the absolute cornerstone of balanced Islamic theology. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abū Ḥanīfah, and Imam al-Māturīdī all converge to affirm that the family of the Prophet ﷺ occupies a transcendent station of spiritual purity, honor, and guidance. By anchoring the heart in deep, uncompromised reverence for the Prophetic household—recognising Hazrat ʿAlī as the unmatched gateway to knowledge, and Al-Ḥasan and Al-Ḥusayn as the eternal Princes of Paradise—the believer successfully purifies their soul, fulfilling the ultimate covenant of love demanded by the Creator.

PART VII

THE PROPHETIC LEGACY AND COMMUNITY ORTHODOXY

Chapter 24: The Integrity of the Prophetic Generation: The Status of the Sahaba

Having established the absolute theological necessity of loving and honouring the *Ahl al-Bayt*, we arrive at the naturally complementary pillar of community orthodoxy: the absolute integrity and status of the Companions (*Sahaba*) of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In the highly sophisticated structural framework of Hanafi-Maturidi *Usul al-Din* (principles of religion), defending the collective reliability (*ʿAdalah*) of the *Sahaba* is not a mere historical sentiment. It is an existential protective measure designed to preserve the entire corporate transmission of Islamic law and dogma.

Throughout history, the generation of the *Sahaba* became the prime target of extreme heterodox movements. Some extreme factions attempted to invalidate the spiritual integrity of the senior Companions to subvert the authoritative textual chain of transmission. Conversely, early political literalists weaponized historical civil disputes to cast unwarranted doubt upon the cosmic ranking of the Prophet's immediate circle.

Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah and Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī systematically rejected these deviations. They codified an unyielding theological baseline: to protect the integrity of the message, one must protect the unassailable integrity of the messengers who transmitted it. This chapter outlines the precise, middle-way position of Sunni orthodoxy regarding the vertical integrity of the Prophetic generation.

Qur'an Evidence

The foundational status and divine pleasure granted to the Companions is explicitly dictated by the textual transmission (*naql*) of divine revelation. Allah Most High says:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

"And the first to lead the way, from the Emigrants (Muhajirun) and the Helpers (Ansar), and those who followed them in goodness—Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him."
(Qur'an 9:100)

This verse establishes an immutable, eternal standard of cosmic evaluation. Within Hanafi *Usul*, the divine phrase *Radiya Allahu ʿAnhum* (Allah is well-pleased with them) represents a definitive, permanent spiritual seal. Allah Most High, utilizing His pre-eternal, infinite knowledge (*al-ʿIlm*), looked into the hearts of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* and announced His permanent pleasure with them as a collective generation.

Furthermore, Allah Most High explicitly warns the wider Ummah against harboring any internal malice or linguistic toxicity toward this primary generation, commanding the believers to supplicate:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِم يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

"And those who came after them say: Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and put not in our hearts any malice toward those who have believed."
(Qur'an 59:10)

This text creates a rigid epistemological boundary for all subsequent generations. True faith (*iman*) is structurally characterized by looking

backward at the foundational generation with a heart entirely purified of *ghill* (malice, resentment, or hatred).

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of preserving the honor of the *Sahaba* is also clearly shown in the living explanation of the Prophetic Sunnah. Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ issued a severe, categorical warning to the community, stating:

"Do not insult my Companions! Do not insult my Companions! For by the One in whose Hand is my soul, if one of you were to spend the equivalent of Mount Uhud in gold, it would not equal a mud [a handful] of one of them, nor even half of it."

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions [Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba], Hadith no. 3673; and Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Virtues of the Companions [Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba], Hadith no. 2540).

This prophetic text establishes a structural asymmetry between the *Sahaba* and the rest of humanity. Their proximity to the Prophetic light and their foundational sacrifices create a qualitative spiritual distinction that cannot be matched by any volume of quantitative good deeds performed by later generations.

Furthermore, Hazrat ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd (ra) narrated a definitive prophetic structural timeline, stating that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The best of people are my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them."

(Narrated by al-Bukhārī in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions [Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba], Hadith no. 3651; and Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Virtues of the Companions [Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba], Hadith no. 2533).

This famous narration of the *Khayr al-Qurun* (The Best Generations) solidifies the theological principle that the structural integrity of the religion is at its absolute peak at its point of origin.

Discussion

Human beings understand that the reliability of a message is entirely dependent on the unassailable integrity of its couriers. If a historian attempts to reconstruct an ancient empire based on witnesses whom he simultaneously labels as untrustworthy, corrupt, or deceitful, his entire historical model collapses under the weight of its own logical contradictions.

This exact epistemological rule applies with infinite necessity to Islamic theology. The *Sahaba* are the primary, foundational vessels through which every single letter of the Qur'an and every single narration of the Sunnah were structurally transmitted to posterity. They are the human infrastructure of the religion. Therefore, to systematically denigrate the collective reliability of the *Sahaba* is to commit intellectual and theological suicide; it effectively severs the chain of custody (*Isnād*) between the modern believer and the Prophet ﷺ, reducing the entire sacred library of *naql* to speculative unreliability.

For this reason, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition establishes a brilliant, protective methodological rule: we affirm the collective spiritual integrity (*ʿAdalah*) of all the Companions, while recognising that they were human beings who were not individually infallible (*maʿsum*). When analysing the complex historical conflicts and civil wars (*Fitna*) that occurred among them —such as the battles of Jamal and Siffin—orthodox theology commands the suspension of judgment (*al-imsak*).
We firmly refuse to look back at their political disputes with the clinical arrogance of modern revisionism. We recognise that they were elite practitioners of *Ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning); those who arrived at

the correct stance received a double reward, and those who erred received a single reward, but their pure intentions and cosmic ranking remain entirely untouched by earthly turmoil.

Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

The parameters established by Imam Abu Hanifah and systematically codified by Imam al-Maturidi provide the definitive Sunni framework for protecting the honor of the Companions. Together, their texts form an unshakeable intellectual shield against sectarian rewriting.

- **The Unyielding Rule of al-Fiqh al-Akbar**

Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah outlines the baseline metric of orthodoxy with absolute precision in his text, declaring: *"We do not mention any of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ except with goodness."* This short, powerful maxim functions as a structural filter for the mind. By enforcing a strict policy of speaking only of their virtues, the Imam targeted the deep-seated malice of heterodox groups. He established that a person's Sunni identity is directly measured by their linguistic discipline regarding the Prophetic circle.

- **Imam al-Maturidi and the Epistemology of Transmission**

In *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī elevates this principle by providing the definitive rational-epistemological proof for the reliability of the *Sahaba*. He argues that if the collective generation of the *Sahaba* were structurally compromised, it would fundamentally invalidate the mass-transmitted text (*tawātur*) of revelation. Because the Qur'an and Sunnah were filtered through their eyes, ears, and tongues, a systemic attack on their collective integrity (*ʿadālah*) is logically an attack on the source text itself.Imam al-Māturīdī establishes a brilliant rational law: to assume that the entire foundational circle of the final Prophet ﷺ fell into immediate

corruption after his departure is to imply that the Prophetic mission itself was a historical failure—a position that directly violates the pre-eternal wisdom (*Ḥikmah*) of Allah. Therefore, affirming their reliability is an absolute epistemological requirement to secure textually certain dogma.

- **Dismantling the Neo-Nasibi Distortion: The Incomparable Ranking of Hazrat ʿAlī and the Pre-Conquest Vanguard**

A critical milestone uniquely developed within this theological framework is the systematic refutation of those who attempt to artificially flatten the hierarchy of the *Sahaba* due to partisan bias. In contemporary discourses, certain neo-Nasibi literalists and political apologists seek to elevate post-conquest (*al-Futūḥ*) figures, such as Muʿāwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, to an artificial parity with the foundational pillars of Islam, going so far as to purposefully omit or minimize the name and virtues of Hazrat ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ra) in their lineages of authority. The Hanafi-Maturidi tradition fiercely strikes down this subtle hostility by deploying the strict, chronological metrics established in revelation. Allah Most High declares:

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنكُم مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِن بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا

"Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought. Those are greater in degree than those who spent afterwards and fought."
(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, 57:10)

Through these explicit textual boundaries, our school establishes that the *Sahaba* do not exist on a flat, uniform landscape. The late-entering Muslims who embraced Islam after the conquest of Makkah (*al-Tulāqāʾ*), while fully preserved within the baseline sanctuary of *ʿadālah*, can never be transactionally or spiritually equated with the elite vanguard who anchored the faith at its point of origin. To elevate a post-conquest political figure

above or even equal to Hazrat ʿAlī (ra) is a profound failure of theological reasoning.Hazrat ʿAlī's cosmic ranking is structurally incomparable; he represents the absolute apex of the pre-conquest vanguard. His unblinking valor at the trench (*Khandaq*) and his historic shattering of the gates of *Khaybar* are mass-transmitted cosmic milestones where the Prophet ﷺ explicitly declared him to be *"a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and whom Allah and His Messenger love."*

To suppress his name or minimize his structural superiority to preserve later political alignments is a toxic manifestation of modern *Naṣb* (hostility to the Prophetic line). Orthodoxy demands that the unique, vertical degree (*Darajah*) of the early Caliphs remains permanently uncompromised by later historical developments.

- **The Unified Shield of Al-Imsāk**

Ultimately, the systematic focus on the integrity of the *Sahaba* in this tradition serves as the ultimate structural filter for the mind. By enforcing the strict policy of *al-imsāk*—the conscious withholding of speech regarding the civil disputes (*Fitnah*) between the Companions—Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah insulated the minds of the Ummah from historical reductionism.The reader understands that the *Sahaba* were elite practitioners of *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning). While those who stood with Hazrat ʿAlī (ra) in defending the structural integrity of the Caliphate were textually and legally on the correct, preferred path, the wider generation of the Companions remains entirely protected from excommunication. This balanced stance immunizes the Ummah against the twin destructive extremes of the *Nawāṣib* and the *Rawāfid,* anchoring active spiritual vigilance and communal loyalty within a textually immaculate framework.

Conclusion

The absolute integrity and collective reliability (*ʿadālah*) of the *Sahaba* stand permanently codified as a non-negotiable pillar of orthodox Sunni community identity. True *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah* theology charts a flawless path of linguistic and intellectual discipline—firmly rejecting both the sectarianism that seeks to denigrate the senior Companions and the revisionism that attempts to downplay the incomparable spiritual stations of Hazrat ʿAlī and the early vanguard.

By recognising the generation of the Companions through the objective, chronological metrics of revelation, the believer secures a textually immaculate and balanced creed. This structural reverence purifies the heart, safeguards the integrity of sacred law, and anchors the soul within the serene, middle-way sanctuary of community orthodoxy.

PART VII

THE PROPHETIC LEGACY AND COMMUNITY ORTHODOXY

Chapter 25: The Hierarchy of Virtue: The Order of Excellence of the Rightly Guided Caliphs

Having established the vertical integrity of the Prophetic generation as a collective whole, we arrive at the absolute culmination of orthodox Sunni creed: the internal hierarchical ranking and structural order of excellence (*Tafdil*) of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafa al-Rashidun*). In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, evaluating the historical succession of governance after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not treated as a matter of fluid political opinion or open-ended historical speculation. Rather, the chronological order of their caliphates is codified as a direct reflection of their cosmic spiritual status and structural ranking in virtue before Allah Most High.

Throughout Islamic history, the sequence of political authority became the premier battleground for sectarian schisms. Heterodox factions attempted to disrupt this baseline by either elevating certain figures to the level of divine infallibility or systematically retroactively excommunicating others to subvert the early consensus of the community.

Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi fiercely countered these deviations. They recognised that the historical order of political succession was not an accident of blind political chance, but a manifest expression of divine wisdom (*Hikmah*) and collective community validation. This final chapter unpacks the precise theological parameters

governing the ranking of the four great pillars of the early caliphate: Hazrat Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Hazrat ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, Hazrat ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan, and Hazrat ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (رضي الله عنهم).

Qur'anic Evidence

The foundational status of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and their collective praise is explicitly dictated by the textual transmission (*naql*) of divine revelation. Allah Most High says:

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure." (Qur'an 48:29)

In the advanced linguistic deconstructions of the Hanafi masters, this verse functions as a beautiful, structural macro-description of the four caliphs who were uniquely and intimately "with him" (*maʿahu*) in establishing the foundation of the state. The text praises their internal psychological traits (*ruhamāʾu baynahum*—merciful among themselves) and their permanent dedication to worship, completely neutralizing any attempt by later revisionists to depict them as power-hungry political rivals locked in perpetual internal warfare.

Furthermore, Allah Most High explicitly establishes the cosmic metric of excellence based on the timing of a believer's sacrifice, stating:

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنكُم مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِن بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا

"Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought. Those are greater in degree than those who spent afterwards and fought."
(Qur'an 57:10)

This text creates an unyielding structural hierarchy of degree (*Darajah*). The senior four caliphs represent the absolute peak of this elite pre-conquest vanguard. Their spiritual elevation is structurally locked into the timeline of revelation itself, ensuring that their positioning over subsequent generations is an immutable reality of sacred history.

Prophetic Evidence

The essential role of the caliphate hierarchy is also clearly shown in the living explanation of the Prophetic Sunnah. Hazrat ʿIrbad ibn Sariyah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ delivered an unyielding command to his immediate circle, stating:

"You must adhere strictly to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafa al-Rashidun*) after me. Bite onto it with your molar teeth."

Narrated by Abu Dawud in *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Book of the Sunnah (*Kitab al-Sunnah*), Hadith no. 4607; and al-Tirmidhi in *Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi*, Book of Knowledge (*Kitab al-ʿIlm*), Hadith no. 2676.

By pairing his own *Sunnah* directly with the legislative and administrative models of his immediate successors, the Prophet ﷺ established that their collective governance was divinely guided, providing an unshakeable protective shield against anyone who attempts to delegitimize their historical leadership.

Furthermore, Hazrat ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه narrated a definitive baseline regarding how the Companions themselves evaluated hierarchy during the Prophet's own lifetime, stating:

"During the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, we used to choose between the people. We used to consider Abu Bakr as the best, then ʿUmar, then ʿUthman."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of the Virtues of the Companions (*Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba*), Hadith no. 3655.

This transmission leaves no room for historical doubt. The hierarchy of excellence was not a secondary political consensus invented long after the passing of the Prophet ﷺ; it was an observable, organic reality recognised by the immediate prophetic circle while revelation was still actively descending.

Discussion

Human beings understand that the structural stability of any enterprise depends on an orderly, recognised succession of expertise. If an institution transitions through a series of leaders who are universally chosen by the community, yet later generations attempt to reverse that order or delegitimize the foundational leaders, the entire historical integrity of that institution is thrown into absolute chaos.

This exact epistemological rule governs the hierarchy of the caliphate. "The sequence of leadership after the Prophet ﷺ—moving from Hazrat Abu Bakr, to ʿUmar, to ʿUthman, and culminating in ʿAli—represents the living validation of collective consensus (***Ijmāʿ***). The corporate body of the ***Sahaba***, anchored by the legal representatives of the ***Ahl al-Bayt***, swore formal allegiance (***Bayʿah)*** **t**o each of these leaders in this precise sequence. While historical reports record that **Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ (ra)** abstained from a formal political pledge due to personal grief following the legal dispute

over Fadak, the subsequent unified *Bayʿah* offered by Hazrat ʿAlī and the Hashimite lineage sealed the institutional validity of the succession. Therefore, to suggest that the sequence was illegitimate or spiritually corrupted is to imply that the entire corporate body of the Companions was incapable of recognizing true spiritual merit—a position that classical creed rejects entirely.

For this reason, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition solidifies an elegant, middle-way interpretive axiom: **the order of their excellence matches the exact order of their historical caliphate.** We recognise that Hazrat Abu Bakr is the absolute best of humanity after the Prophets, followed immediately by Hazrat ʿUmar, then Hazrat ʿUthman, and then Hazrat ʿAli.

This structural taxonomy perfectly balances the unique merits of each individual figure. Affirming the premier ranking of Hazrat Abu Bakr and ʿUmar does not diminish the immense spiritual stations of Hazrat ʿAli or the *Ahl al-Bayt*; rather, it places each giant in their proper, divinely ordained position within the cosmic ecosystem of the Prophetic legacy.

The Absolute Safeguard: Hazrat ʿAli's Own Mass-Transmitted (*Mutawatir*) Witness

Classical Hanafi theology explicitly highlights that establishing this chronological hierarchy is in no way an act of disrespect toward Hazrat ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (رضي الله عنه). In fact, maintaining this precise order directly honors the personal integrity and explicit public statements of Hazrat ʿAli himself.

During his own Caliphate, while standing firmly upon the public pulpit (*minbar*) in the city of Kufa, Hazrat ʿAli openly declared to the masses in a mass-transmitted (*mutawatir*) legal report preserved across dozens of foundational Sunni Hadith collections:

"The best of this Ummah after its Prophet is Abu Bakr, then ʿUmar."

Hazrat ʿAli was so unyielding in preserving this hierarchy that he famously threatened to issue judicial punishments for slander against anyone who fabricated narratives claiming he was superior to Hazrat Abu Bakr and ʿUmar. Therefore, when the Hanafi-Maturidi scholar affirms this chronological order of excellence, they are not acting upon personal bias or marginalising the family of the Prophet ﷺ; they are directly repeating, validating, and submitting to the explicit, recorded testimony of Hazrat ʿAli himself.

Unpacking Technical Excellence (*Tafdil*): Unique Perfections vs. Deficiency

Furthermore, to fully comprehend this hierarchy without falling into academic error, one must understand the precise technical definition of "excellence" (*Tafdil*) within the school. In Hanafi metaphysics, stating that Hazrat Abu Bakr or Hazrat ʿUmar is *afdal* (more excellent) signifies that they possess a premier volume of **divine reward (*thawab*)** before Allah Most High for being the absolute first to completely sacrifice their wealth, lives, and worldly comfort to anchor the message of Islam when it was at its most vulnerable, isolated point of origin.
Crucially, this technical evaluation **never implies a prior deficiency or lack of virtue in Hazrat ʿAli.** The master theologians of the school emphasise that the four Rightly Guided Caliphs do not share an identical, uniform trait; rather, each pillar exemplifies a unique, unmatched, and irreplaceable dimension of Prophetic perfection:

- **Hazrat Abu Bakr al-Siddiq** excels the entire nation in foundational, unblinking sacrifice and absolute spiritual truthfulness (*Siddiqiyyah*).

- **Hazrat ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab** excels in absolute systemic justice, corporate governance, and the capacity to split truth from falsehood (*Faruqiyyah*).

- **Hazrat ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan** excels in unmatched modesty, deep angelic spiritual aesthetic, and immense, world-saving philanthropy (*Haya'*).

- **Hazrat ʿAli ibn Abi Talib** excels as the unmatched gateway to the city of sacred knowledge, possessing unparalleled esoteric depth, heroic battlefield chivalry (*futuwwah*), and the sublime honor of carrying the physical and spiritual continuum of the Prophetic lineage through the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

  Therefore, the Sunni ranking is an inclusive celebration of distinct perfections, not an exclusionary demotion. It guarantees that the highest possible rank of the *Ahl al-Bayt* is protected with fierce devotion, while honoring the structural timeline of early Islamic history.

  Key Insights from al-Fiqh al-Akbar and Kitab al-Tawhid

  The insights found within *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitab al-Tawhid* establish the precise theological parameters required to seal the manuscript, providing an absolute intellectual barrier against heterodox narratives.

- **The Definitive Enumeration of al-Fiqh al-Akbar**

  Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah outlines the absolute baseline of Sunni identity at the very conclusion of his text by stating: ***"The most excellent of mankind after the Prophets—upon them be peace—is Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, then ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, then ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan, then ʿAli ibn Abi Talib."***

  This explicit list functions as the definitive hallmark of the school. The Imam understood that locking this sequence into the core creed was an existential necessity to protect the common Muslim from the polarising currents of political sectarianism, creating a permanent structural peace across the community. This was beautifully proven by the Imam's life; while he maintained this strict text, he simultaneously risked his life and suffered

imprisonment for defending the political and legal safety of Hazrat ʿAli's descendants against imperial tyranny.

- **Imam al-Maturidi and the Rationality of Historical Choice**

In *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi elevates this principle by providing the definitive rational-theological proof for the caliphate hierarchy. He argues that because Allah Most High governs the cosmos through absolute wisdom (*Hikmah*), He does not allow the collective entity of His chosen community to gather upon a foundational error. The choice of the *Sahaba* to repeatedly appoint these four leaders in this exact order is a manifest sign of divine validation. The Imam demonstrates that any attempt to retroactively dismantle this sequence requires an assumption of ignorance or corruption on the part of the early community, an assumption that is both textually and rationally untenable.

The Unbroken Continuum of Truth

A final, foundational insight shared by both Imams is that the four Rightly Guided Caliphs represent an unbroken, unified continuum of Prophetic guidance. They were not competing factional leaders; they were a singular team of spiritual masters who successfully guarded the outward transmission and inward realities of the faith. By affirming their sequential ranking, the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition harmonizes the entire community, allowing the believer to look back at the origins of Islam with deep reverence, secure in the knowledge that the leadership of the *Ummah* was divinely secured from its very inception.

Conclusion

The belief in the precise hierarchy of virtue of the Rightly Guided Caliphs forms the perfect, majestic seal of orthodox Islamic theology. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam al-Maturidi all converge to affirm

that the sequence of their historical leadership reflects their ultimate spiritual standing before the Creator. By anchoring the heart in this clean, historical hierarchy while maintaining the highest love and respect for the virtues of Hazrat ʿAli and the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the believer successfully navigates the turbulent waters of historical sectarianism, sealing their manuscript of faith within the serene, unshakeable sanctuary of Sunni orthodoxy.

Concluding Remarks

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds. We praise Him for the blessing of faith, the blessing of guidance, and the blessing of belonging to the Ummah of our master Muhammad ﷺ. We ask Him to send peace and blessings upon His final Messenger, his family, his Companions, and all those who follow his path until the Day of Judgement.

The structural trajectory of this work—moving from the epistemological foundations of divine existence to the delicate mechanisms of human acquisition and final salvation—culminates in a singular, immutable truth: the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition is fundamentally a theology of balance (*al-tawāzun*). By evaluating how *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* and *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* operate as a unified, living inheritance, the advanced student, the teacher, and the common Muslim are left with an intellectual framework that successfully bridges the gap between pure scriptural literalism and speculative rationalism.

The ultimate objective of this volume has never been to replace, override, or act as a substitute for the foundational masterworks of our tradition. No contemporary summary can ever hope to capture the profound legal depth of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* or the unmatched intellectual brilliance of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Rather, this work has sought to serve as a textually faithful reinforcement, demonstrating the unbroken historical continuation and complete integration of these texts into the core belief system of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*.

The teachings of Imam al-Aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfah and Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī do not deviate from the prophetic path; they are entirely synergistic. Throughout these chapters, we have systematically evaluated the six pillars of faith (*īmān*)—belief in Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His messengers, the Last Day, and the divine decree (*Qadar*)—while intentionally demonstrating how this theological baseline naturally includes recognizing

the sublime ranking of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and the collective integrity of the righteous *Ṣaḥābah*. Every academic effort has been rigorously taken to remain absolutely authentic and true to the precise words of the great Imam and the Master of Guidance. In these contemporary, turbulent times—where sacred *ʿaqīdah* is dangerously taught through fragmented social media clips and unverified internet commentators instead of living, authorized teachers (*mashāyikh*)—this book is offered with the deep hope that it serves as an unshakeable source of clarity and stable guidance for the modern reader.

Ultimately, *ʿaqīdah* must be recognised as an indispensable, vital pillar of Islam, but it cannot exist in a spiritual vacuum. True orthodoxy demands a comprehensive equilibrium that unites the three fundamental sciences of the religion: Creed (*ʿAqīdah*), Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and Spiritual Purification (*Taṣawwuf*). It was precisely for this reason that Imam al-Aʿzam termed the science of creed *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*—the Greater Understanding—because it establishes the root system from which all branches of legal action and internal illumination derive their structural validity. However, to achieve absolute completeness before the Creator, a believer cannot ignore the outward requirements of the sacred law (*Sharīʿah*) governed by *fiqh*, nor can they neglect the internal refinement of the heart categorized as *Iḥsān*, *tazkiyah*, and *taṣawwuf*.

The outward ritual performance of the limbs and the inner correction of the intellect are intended to drive the soul toward absolute purity. Allah Most High explicitly emphasizes the divine love reserved for those who actively seek this internal and external refinement, declaring in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

"Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves."
(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:222)

When this complete tripartite path is realized, theology transitions from dry cognitive data into an active catalyst for salvation. True *tazkiyah* ensures that the "greater understanding" of the mind becomes a living, breathing mechanism of devotion. The believer stands fully integrated—purified in intellect through correct creed, disciplined in body through the *Sharīʿah*, and illuminated in spirit through the constant cleansing of the heart. To permanently seal the necessity of this internal evolution, Allah Most High outlines the absolute equation for ultimate success at the apex of revelation:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ

"He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself."
(Sūrah al-Aʿlā, 87:14)

Sound belief is meant to guide a person away from argumentation and vanity, steering them toward wisdom, certainty, gratitude, and humble obedience to Allah. By grounding our understanding in these classical, uncompromised principles, the path of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions remains completely visible, perfectly protected, and accessible to all who seek eternal success in the Hereafter.

I ask Allah Most High to make this humble effort a source of pleasure and benefit for its readers, to forgive any errors and shortcomings contained within it, and to allow it to contribute, even in a small way, to the preservation and transmission of the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition. May Allah grant us sound belief, beneficial knowledge, sincere worship, righteous actions, and steadfastness upon the path of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ until our final breath.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed, You are the Bestower."
— (Sūrah Āli ʿImrān, 3:8)

Appendix

Key Qur'anic Verses of Faith

The following verses were cited throughout this book and represent some of the most important Qur'anic foundations of Islamic creed. Readers are encouraged to reflect upon these verses.Belief in Allah

Allah Is One

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

"Say: He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Self-Sufficient. He neither begets nor is begotten. And there is none comparable to Him."

(Sūrah al-Ikhlās, 112:1–4)

The Proof of Mutual Exclusion (Dalīl al-Tamānuʿ)

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

"Had there been within the heavens and the earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe."

(Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ, 21:22)

Nothing Resembles Allah

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing."

(Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:11)

Allah Is the First and the Last

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is Knowing of all things."

(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, 57:3)

Āyat al-Kursī

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

"Allah—there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence."

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:255)

Belief in the Angels

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All of them believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers."

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:285)

The Obedience of the Angels

لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and they do whatever they are commanded."

(Sūrah al-Taḥrīm, 66:6)

Belief in the Revealed Books

Revelation as Guidance

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ

"Mankind was one community. Then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of glad tidings and warnings and revealed with them the Book in truth."

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:213)

Preservation of the Qur'an

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We shall preserve it."

(Sūrah al-Ḥijr, 15:9)

Belief in the Messengers

Messengers Sent to Every Nation

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

"We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, saying: Worship Allah and avoid false gods."

(Sūrah al-Naḥl, 16:36)

The Final Prophet

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَـٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets."

(Sūrah al-Aḥẓāb, 33:40)

Belief in the Last Day

Every Soul Shall Taste Death

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

"Every soul shall taste death."

(Sūrah Āl ʿImrān, 3:185)

Resurrection

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ۝ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ

"Then indeed, after that, you will surely die. Then indeed, on the Day of Resurrection, you will surely be resurrected."

(Sūrah al-Muʾminūn, 23:15–16)

Accountability

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۝ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it."

(Sūrah al-Zalzalah, 99:7–8)

Belief in Divine Decree

Everything Is Created According to a Decree

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

"Indeed, We have created everything according to a decree."

(Sūrah al-Qamar, 54:49)

Human Choice and Divine Will

وَمَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"You do not will except that Allah, Lord of the worlds, wills."

(Sūrah al-Takwīr, 81:29)

Hope, Mercy, and Cosmic Distinction

The Horizon of Comprehensive Forgiveness

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا

"Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins."

(Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:53)

The Prohibition of Self-Righteousness

فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

"So do not claim purity for yourselves. He knows best who is truly God-fearing."

(Sūrah al-Najm, 53:32)

The Metric of Absolute Moral Separation

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ۝ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

"Then shall We treat the Muslims like the criminals? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?"

(Sūrah al-Qalam, 68:35–36)

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَّحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ۚ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

"Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We will make them equal to those who have believed and done righteous deeds, equal in their life and their death? Evil is the judgement they make."

(Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:21)

The Prophetic Legacy and Community Orthodoxy

The Mandatory Love for the Lineage

قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

"Say: I ask of you no reward for this except love for my close relatives."

(Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:23)

The Metaphysical Purification of the Household (Āyat al-Taṭhīr)

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

"Allah intends only to remove from you impurity, O People of the Household, and to purify you completely."

(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:33)

The Cosmic Praise of the Early Vanguard

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

"And the first to lead the way among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in excellence—Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him."

(Sūrah al-Tawbah, 9:100)

The Immutable Divine Pleasure

لَّقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree."

(Sūrah al-Fath, 48:18)

The Pre-and-Post Conquest Hierarchy

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنكُم مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِن بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا

"Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the conquest. They are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards."

(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, 57:10)

The Purification of Hearts from Malice

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

"And those who came after them say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and place not in our hearts any malice towards those who have believed."

(Sūrah al-Ḥashr, 59:10)

The Macro-Structure of the Caliphs

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking bounty from Allah and His pleasure."

(Sūrah al-Fath, 48:29)

A Prayer for Steadfastness

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

(Sūrah Āl ʿImrān, 3:8)

May Allah grant us sound belief, beneficial knowledge, sincere worship, and steadfastness upon the creed of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the path of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah. Āmīn.